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EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 433. FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 17TH, 1897. [ONE PENNY.

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SHORT STORIES

No. 433. ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending April 17th, 1897.

A LEGEND OF KNOTT MILL FAIR.

EVERYBODY has heard of Knot Mill Fair, once on a time the saturnalia of the northern counties; and every lover of quaint streets knows that Deansgate, Manchester, was in the same days one of the most irresponsible thoroughfares in England. The Fair has gone, and the street has been groomed, educated, and civilised out of recognition long since. Ergo, as my story opens at that time when the showmen were in full possession of the open space around St. John's Church, just off the dirty old street still in all its ragamuffin glories, with its half-gross of low public-houses, doing even a brisker trade than usual, it is evident that it is a tale of half a century or so ago.

At that time, not far from the fair ground, and in the direction of the Liverpool Road, there existed a short blind alley well-named Welter Lane, which was stopped up at the dark end with a public-house known to all and sundry as the "'Op Pole." It is true that the sign depicted a gentleman in the attire of Hans Breitmann's mermaid, striking (in addition to an attitude) an instrument with five strings, each the thickness of a kitchen poker, whence antiquaries have concluded that the real intentions of the tavern's sponsors was to name it "The Apollo."

A rickety old piano in the principal room and a long established reputation for its Saturday free-an-easy bore out in this opinion, but, nevertheless, we bow to the voice of the multitude, and speak of the tavern as the "'Op Pole."

John Scroggs, the owner thereof, had not a musical name, and he hardly looked a musical man. The alley was *so* blind and the "'Op Pole" *so* secluded (not to say shady) that his customers were "a rum lot," as the police put it, and Scroggs might have had some trouble to keep his license had he not been on remarkably good terms with the force. Many a little secret divulged in the expansiveness of beer in his frowsy bar-parlour had been edited and revised at the police station and presented to the courts as "information received." Some of the fame of more than one of the Manchester detectives might very fairly have been claimed by the innkeeper. John was a modest man,

Edited By C. Arthur Pearson

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however, and pocketed the shekels of the police without bragging about it.

It happened one day, when the great fair was in full blast, that Mr. Scroggs had a visitor in his bar-parlour whom he regarded with much curiosity and some suspicion. Not that this visitor was a suspicious-looking character in the ordinary sense of the phrase; he was a good-looking young fellow, and well-dressed enough. But he had made his appearance with the early rum and hot coffee customers, and with the morning wearing away he was still in the gloomiest corner mooning over a beer-stained sporting paper, with a bottle of the landlord's best tincture of logwood almost untouched before him. He was palpably perturbed in spirit, moreover, and threw a startled glance towards the door each time a newcomer entered.

"Swells don't dodge in here to swipe port at five in the morning," muttered John to himself, "and if that young chap ain't got something on his mind, I'm a cherrabim!"

As the landlord sat quietly behind the screen of his bar windows watching his customer and thinking the problem over, a fat little man in the loudest possible check suit bustled noisily into the room. There was nothing suspicious about *him* at any rate. From his smooth chubby face, *viâ* the ponderous gold chain and massive bunch of seals reclining on his greasy waistcoat, to his wonderfully square-toed boots, every inch of the little man shouted "showman."

"Tom Maber!" exclaimed the young fellow in the corner dropping the paper from before his face.

"Why, Mr. Frank Burton!" said the little man, crossing the room towards him. "What on earth——"

"Hush, no names!" said the other. "What's your drink?"

"Rum 'ot," said the little man promptly, dropping into the chair opposite Frank. "I've got the bloomin' 'ump. And there's nothing like rum 'ot for that as I ever heard tell of."

"I thought you were in the States," said Frank, as the landlord retired to his coign of vantage after filling the order.

"So I have been," acknowledged the showman; "picking up ideas and freaks. Only you don't catch me missing Knot Mill. Tell you what, Master Frank, they do know something about the business over there, and no mistake! I've got my show fixed right up in Yankee style you'd better believe. No keeping the public a-waiting half an hour to see one ugly fat woman or a sickly human skellington. You pays your dime—leastways it's threepence—and there they are all on gorgis thrones ready for you. A baker's dozen of extra quality freaks; all warranted genuine, and shown by the littlest dwarf with the biggest gift of the gab in creation—dash his eyes for a spiteful little toad! 'Maber's Meteoric Marvels' is knocking them this time, I can tell you."

"Then wherefore the hump?"

"It's the dwarf," explained Maber. "He's set the whole lot snarling at each other. There's the Tattooed Prince in the Iron Mask so rampageously jea ous of the gentleman wot prefers broken glass to pickled onions, that he won't show, and it's all along of that dwarf! And there was four-and-threepence that wanted its money back this very morning!"

"And got it?"

"Not likely," said Maber simply. "But it's saying it's been swindled all round the fair."

"That's bad," acknowledged Frank, sighing. "But, by George, it's not a circumstance to the mess I'm in."

"I knowed it!" exclaimed the showman almost triumphantly. "I said to myself as soon as I'd seen you: 'Here's the young medical what's the pride of your own village in a pickle, and you've got to get him out of it, Tom Maber.' Now, what's the trouble, Master Frank?"

"Haven't you seen the morning papers?"

"Don't read 'em in show time," said Maber shortly.

"You could have seen it on the contents bills," said Frank bitterly. "It's big enough: 'Medical Students Again.' 'Riot at a Theatre.' 'Attendant Injured.' 'Disappearance of the Ringleader.' I'm the ringleader, if you please."

The little showman whistled.

"That's a bit thicker than I should have thought," said he. "What the dickens does old Dr. Burton's son want with rioting at theatres?"

"Oh, I'm a complete ass," acknowledged Frank impatiently. "But I don't see how they make me out the ringleader, and I certainly didn't drop the stool on the fellow's head. It's this way. You know they played *George Barnwell* at the Queen's last night?"

"A rattling good drammer," said the showman approvingly. "I only know one better, and that's *Jack Long of Texas*."

"Fustian!" continued the medical student. "Filthy fustian! Anyway the Manchester medicals always have protested and always will protest against *George Barnwell*."*

"Think their morals don't want any improving?"

"Possibly," went on the other. "Myself, I object to it because it's such stilted rubbish. However, as usual we marched down to the theatre in military order, and, I suppose because we're the dashest fools, I and long Jack Stevenson marched in front. He took one half into the pit and the rest followed me up into the gallery. Then we started guying—legitimately, I give you my word. Nothing worse than an occasional orange passed between us and the stage. Then they put the big lights out and somebody dropped a stool into the pit. I wasn't near it that I know of."

"Then how can they make out it was you?"

"I'd been chaffing a bobby who was supposed to be keeping order," explained Frank, "and the second the man in the pit got the stool on his head the bobby went for me. Knew my name, too and yelled to all creation to stop me. I got out of the theatre with a rush of the other fellows, and scudded over the Old Bailey Bridge into the wilds of Salford. All of a sudden I remembered that the show folks would be busy fixing up things for the fair, and I dodged round there, and spent the night in an empty waggon."

"Lor' bless you," said the showman, "why didn't you think of me? I could have put you up beautiful. You could have dossed comfortable with the Cannibal King from Woora-Woora. But why on earth are you running away? Why don't you go and face the music, if it wasn't you?"

"That bobby will swear he saw me do it," said Frank gloomily. "But I'd give myself up at once but for one thing. I want to see my old dad. He's getting very weak, and I've got a presentiment that if they send me to quod, it will just bowl him over."

"That," remarked the little showman gravely, "is a good sort of thing to think of beforehand."

* A historic fact. It was at one time invariably played at the Queen's Theatre, Manchester, on Shrove Tuesday, and the medical students invariably turned the playhouse into a bear garden.

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"I know, I know," agreed the student, "I've been the very largest size of idiot, I allow. But, anyway, I want to see the old boy, and tell him that nine-tenths of it is a lie."

"Well," said Maber soothingly, "if that bloke didn't get the stool too hard it'll only be a fine. Still, if you must go home I'll help you if I can. What's your plan?"

"I daren't go near the railway station. I was thinking of tramping it after nightfall."

"Just the way to be pulled up certain, let alone that it's a tidy step to Budworth. I tell you what, Mr. Frank. You come and lie purdoo in Maber's Meteoric—that's the ticket! There's a little fair at Knutsford on Saturday, and I can easy send a van down without anybody twigging nothing. From there it's my lady's ta-ta to Budworth, and there you are!"

"You're a good little chap," said the medical student, grasping the other's hand. "But what about your people? Won't they talk?"

"They don't get much chance," said the showman coolly. "Freaks is very like nuns in their off-time. Why, it would burst up the business if the public could see 'em for nix! All except the Tattooed Prince, and he goes about like a blooming lord when he's got his coat on. Which shows the ingratitood of the chap. But, my stars, I've an idea! I'll sack him, and you shall have his shop until Saturday!"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, we'll make you up into a lovely tattooed nobleman! It *is* done at times in the profession. Just your back and arms nicely painted and a beautiful velvet half mask with 'oles for your eyes all complete and lovely. And I'm blessed if you shall show except when the public 'owls. What do you say?"

Frank laughed.

"That's 'arty," continued the showman. "Now, what do you say?"

"Oh, I'm on," said Frank, still laughing; "lead ahead. Let's go out of this hole at once."

"We'll jump into a cab and drive to the back of the show," said Maber, rising. "They'll think it's a freak arriving. Come along."

As the two left the tavern the landlord of the "'Op Pole" watched them to the end of the lane, whistling softly to himself. "And now," said he, rubbing his nose meditatively, "I'll just step down to the Albert Street Police Station and see if Detective Tampling is to be found. It ought to be a fiver at any rate."

* * * * *

Detective Tampling was in a complacent mood and in no particular hurry when he entered the fair ground that afternoon. He revolved in his mind a brilliant capture with the slight touch of the dramatic art in it that his soul rejoiced in. There was another plain-clothes man with him, but he was of the lower order of creation, merely a representative of the brute force of the law. Detective Tampling personified the intelligence thereof.

As he strolled leisurely through the mob he gazed with an indulgent eye on the humours of the fair. And certainly to the student of human nature the showman busily engaged in his eternal operation of quickly securing an audience and getting rid of it quicker still is a man to linger with. Foghorns, watchman's rattles, and cymbals; big drums and pistols, the most German of German bands, and the wheeziest of steam organs were all going together, and the gentlemen of the profession, every man jack of them with voices as hoarse and as foggy as the fifth of November, were all competing with the rest of the row at the top of their stentorian lungs.

Maber's Meteoric Marvels were planted well in the centre of this pandemonium, and the large and handsome stand which held them was adorned with numerous highly-coloured pictures, principally of a gory nature, which could not well have had any connection with anything inside the show. Maber himself was on "the parade" of his establishment, busily working a foghorn with one hand and a rattle with the other. Anon he would seize a drum-stick and bang vigorously into a huge gong hung conveniently behind him, and anon he would pause in the assault to shriek: "Hi! Hi! Hi! We ain't just a-going to begin, becos we allays have begun. On'y show in the fair allays ready and piping hot! Ree-member there—is—NO waiting. All THE marvels of the universe, as shown before the crowned heads of Europe, Asia, Africa and Wigan! Walk up! walk up! walk up!" and the little man had dodged down the steps, captured a hesitating couple, and was back again banging the big gong before you could have said "Jack Robinson."

Detective Tampling and his companion edged through the crowd to the front, and as two or three country folks were ascending the steps they quietly followed them, depositing their coppers in the pigeon-hole of the pay office like ordinary mortals. As the little group entered, a tiny dwarf with a weirdly malicious face beckoned them to come forward.

"Step right here ladies and gentlemen," he said, his words pouring out in a constant flow, without change of intonation, and with the smallest possible amount of punctuation. "You takes us where we've got to and has the privilege of stopping till we've got all round the blooming thirteen marvels every one of them unique without counting me which is the smallest and best-looking dwarf wot ever wos;" and he rambled on till he arrived at the tattooed man. "Now we come to the unfortunate young Prince from Cream Tartary wot wos wrecked on a raft in the Andaman Islands and was tortured by the Kalmuck Tartars till he confessed that he was born at 4 p.m. on a Sunday morning when he was at once too-tood with all the regular astronomical signs of his constellations on his back all quite correck according to the Herald's College as you may see for yourselves and the hireogriffiths signerfying his melancholy fate all down his arms which everything has come entirely true so far ladies and gentlemen as argues that Old Moore and Mother Shipton ain't in it with some of those furriners and all done with the tooth of a cuttle-fish and the juice of a deadly poisonous tree indignant to the island."

As the dwarf paused for breath the detectives pushed their way to the front.

"I arrest this man," said Tampling, putting his hand on the shoulder of the Prince. "Warrant in my pocket, if you want to see it."

"What for?" shrieked the little dwarf. "Here, boss! boss!"

Maber came quickly into the interior of his show, and took in the situation at once.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" he remarked. "Wot's up, sergeant?"

"This chap knows well enough," said the detective, and indeed his prisoner was making no show of resistance and offering no remonstrances. "Now the only thing you can do is to get us out as quietly as possible for your own sake."

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"Certainly," said the little showman, bustling to the back door of the tent, "right you are, inspector. We'll have a cab at the back here in no time, and I do hope these ladies and gentlemen won't go and talk and ruin my show."

The small crowd, congratulating itself upon having its money's worth for once in a way, gathered excitedly round the door, and the energetic little showman, calling repeatedly on his audience to witness that he was giving the police every assistance, got a cab and bundled the three in at once. As it drove off the people rushed out, each to give his own version of the affair, and as in their imaginations the prisoner ranged from a bank forger to an early edition of Jack the Ripper, Maber's Meteoric Marvels did more business in the next hour than they had done in any previous day of their existence.

Meanwhile the cab had pulled up at the Albert Street Police Station, and Detective Tampling presented his prisoner to the inspector sitting in solitary state at the desk.

"This is our chap, Mr. Inspector," said he, dexterously removing the half mask, and disclosing the features of a fair-haired young fellow with a cowed look in his eyes.

"That's him, is it?" said the inspector gravely, opening his charge book.

"And if you believe me," went on the detective grinning, "he's painted like a Trojan."

"Pynted!" cried the prisoner, speaking for the first time. "Here, guv'nor, wot are you giving us?"

"Come, none of your gammon," insisted Tampling. "You're painted all over like a Mede and Parthian, Mr. Frank Burton."

"'Arry Jackson's my nyme," answered the Prince, beginning to get virtuously indignant. "And if you've run me in for being a pynted fraud you're blooming well mistook. Blimy, guv'nor, have a go at this!" and he bared his capacious breast with such energy that a couple of buttons flew off his waistcoat.

"Are you sure you've made no mistake, Tampling?" asked the inspector uneasily.

The detective smiled sarcastically, and, dipping his handkerchief into the office water-bottle, began to dab viciously at the head of Orion the Hunter, the feather in whose cap was tickling the toes of the Twins high up on the right shoulder blade of the Prince. Nothing stained the immaculate white of the handkerchief, nothing whatever, for absolute cleanliness is an irksome and melancholy necessity in the profession which the Prince adorned. As the detective paused, with a bewildered look on his face, a policeman entered the office, and the inspector appealed to him at once.

"Bates," said he, pointing to the prisoner, "who is this man?"

"Don't know him from Adam," answered X 54, "except by the tattooing."

"Then he isn't the medical student, Burton?"

"Not a bit like," said the policeman derisively.

"Then what I want to know," put in Detective Tampling desperately, turning to the Prince: "Why didn't you open your blessed mouth? You've got a tongue, haven't you?"

"'Ow did I know what yer were lagging me for?" asked the Prince indignantly.

"Oh, I see," put in the inspector, "you've done a step or two in your time, eh, my man?"

"Onect or twict, guv'nor," acknowledged the Prince, "but I ain't done nothink in this blooming tawn that I knows on."

"Well, we don't want you," said the inspector genially. "You can sling your hook when you've told us a bit. Our information was that Maber had given you the push this morning, and that a man we *do* want had got your job. Now give us the rights of it."

"Ho, I see!" exclaimed the Prince. "Myber *did* come in with a toff abate noon, but I wus O.K. in my plyce, and he giv me some lip, that wus all. I cawn't tell for dead sure, but I think the toff was shoved into the money-box. Noice arryngement, too, 'cos ony 'is 'ands 'ud show."

"I can get him still," said Tampling, starting for the door.

"You needn't trouble," began the last comer. "That's just what I've come about. It was a gallery boy that caught Phillips on the head with the stool, Phillips saw him do it. And he's as right as a trivet already, moreover. Burton is to be summoned with half-a-dozen other names we've got, and it'll be forty shillings and costs for *him*, as near as I can fix it."

"Ain't I to 'ave somethink for this 'ere wrongful copping?" whined the injured Prince.

"Be off," said the inspector sharply. "Stay, here's a couple of bob for your cab fare. Tell Mr. Burton, if he's there still, not to make a fool of himself, but to go back to Owen's right away. Now mizzle!"

The Prince took the coin thrown him, spat on it, and dropped it into his pocket, winked at the abashed detective, and departed. When he reached Maber's, the student was certainly not there, but Tom nevertheless relieved his mind within the next ten minutes, and the Prince added a golden coin to the florin which he had *not* frivelled away in cab-fare.

When the story spread round the fair-ground, with such slight exaggerations as that the Prince had been held down in a bath and scrubbed by four of the strongest members of the force, the money poured so fast into the Meteoric pay-office that the price went up to sixpence, "to pervent the loss of life consekwent on crushing, as by lor commanded," as the dwarf put it.

Within half-an-hour Maber had an enormous new placard out, stating that by order of Her Majesty, the Prince had been duly authenticated by the High Court of Justice and that all others *therefore* were impostors! At the end of the week the little man could have forsworn freaks for the rest of his life if he had been so minded, and he insisted on paying Frank's fine which, be it stated to the credit of the perspicacity of the force, was exactly forty shillings and costs.

Arthur Morris.

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Even if Philip had not taken the trouble to point him out to me beforehand, I should have noticed the new trooper at dress parade.

He sat his steed like a born horseman, his figure erect, his clear blue eyes lacking the squint peculiar to the new-comer under the glaring vault of the brassy Mexican sky, his comely lips closed into a precise line that bespoke a character in which self-control was the chief factor, his entire person breathing a suggestion of foreignness to time, place and people.

As still as a statue he sat amid the commonplace hordes, his red-brown hair giving forth from every wave a glint as purely golden as those thrown by the beams of the fiery southern sun itself, and forming a sort of aureole of light about the handsome face backgrounded against the intense blue of the arching heavens.

It was years ago, when Baby and I were, literally as well as figuratively, following Captain Philip about from pillar to post, and had, several weeks before, joined him at this post on the Rio Grande. I was as glad as Baby (our son of four years) to settle down under the grateful shadow of the old Mission of *Santa Madonna del Norte*, and revel in the warmth and sunshine that prevailed when the place was not visited by that dreadful "Northers" that swept from the upper localities I had left, as if to warn a deserter of the continued existence of a home she might otherwise have too easily forgotten.

The garden of the convent belonging to the Mission was a thing of such beauty that I immediately cultivated the acquaintance of the Sisters, who seemed glad to have me and Baby spend some of our leisure time with them.

Among the nuns was one who especially charmed me, so lovely was she, so gentle and sad. I grew to singling out the beautiful Sister Dolorosa from among the others, and talked to her about the fine needlework she did so well. I engaged her services for a set of d'oylies, to be given to a pet cousin as a wedding gift, and cajoled myself into believing that I, thereafter, had an excuse to call often at the convent, and see how the work was progressing.

Sister Ursula, who was Sister Superior of the Convent, smiled indulgently upon us as we sat upon a bench together in the shadowy mimosa-hedged garden, her pious austerity melted by Baby's smiles, which were, each and all, magnets strong enough to attract the women down the sandy paths between the rows of tall Ascension lilies.

How my heart ached for those defrauded Sisters—how I squeezed Baby and hugged Phil after every visit to those saintly souls robbed of the heaven of *home*, and how Baby always grunted and Phil laughed, saying Barracks was a *home*, wasn't it, and how much, compared to the dwellers in tents and shanties, those poor dears had missed!

When Baby fell ill of a fever, both Sister Ursula and Sister Dolorosa came and nursed him until he was strong and well again; it was then that I enshrined them in my heart of hearts for ever. He was just over that fearful attack when Phil was called away with his command to chase some smugglers who had crossed with dutiable merchandise to the Texas side of the "Rio Bravo."

Until he came back I was in a tremor of anxiety, for the desperadoes held life cheaply, and when cornered and fighting for booty had killed many a brave man.

He came with clanging sword, keeping time to the cheery whistle he sent on before him, just as the moon began to peer into the shallow, restless *arroyo* near our quarters, and after my cry of welcome, said:

"Well, little woman, he's a dandy!"

"Who is, Phil?"

"The trooper I pointed out to you."

"*What* is he, Phil?"

"Taffy was a Welshman," began my husband, unbuckling his sword-belt; "but the other lines won't apply. I never saw such daring, such bravery, such nerve! Candidly, little woman, if Taffy hadn't been the man he was, I'd have fared ill—there, don't cry—I'm all right! I'd call you a goose if I didn't consider you a—duck! There, that's better!"

"Oh, Phil!"

"No, dear, you don't 'owe Phil'—it's the Welshman, if anybody, to whom you are indebted. I mean to send that evil-visaged Jorge out of my service, and take Taffy——"

"What's his name, Phil?"

"Comyn Gower."

"I'm so glad."

"That his name's Gower? Why?"

"No—that you are at last going to give that ugly Jorge Mejos his walking papers. I always feared him!"

"Oh, intuition of woman! *I've* mistrusted him ever since I saw him confabbing with old Pedro Querido—he's a sleek scoundrel is Pedro!—and have positive proof that his own brother, Miguel, is a regular smuggler. He was one of the gang we captured to-day."

"Oh, I wish you were anything but a soldier, Phil, just *anything!*" I said.

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"Come, now—ah, there's Taffy—excuse me just a moment, dear."

The next morning saw Comyn Gower installed at our quarters. I confessed that it hurt me to see him polishing up his—Phil's—boots, and putting his military accoutrements in trim. My husband laughed, and called me a "Mystery-maker," accusing me of weaving romances about even old McCulhane in the kitchen. I pleaded guilty to the charge, and joined in the laugh that never hurt anyone and did the laugher a world of good.

Baby took to Trooper Gower from the first, climbing to his broad shoulders, and being carried about in royal state. One day the little fellow hurt his finger, cutting it with the blade of papa's unsheathed sword, and when I ran out at his cry, I found Gower tearing his own kerchief into ribbons, and binding the slight wound.

"There, Baby, now it's all right," I cried, kneeling to comfort my unheroic son. In doing so I came quite near to where the Welshman sat, and as I reached out to pat Baby reassuringly, one great, hot tear splashed upon my wrist. With a start I looked up at the man. The sun-bronzed face bent over the dimpled hand was wet with tears, and I had much ado to restrain the impulsive hand that started up to lay a comforting touch upon his shoulder.

"Te little moster haf hurt his hond. I wass in fault—I should haf watched te poy petter, mattam."

I heartily excused him, and took Baby myself until the shining harness was duly cleansed and ready for use.

After that I managed, without apparent effort, to draw Comyn Gower to talk of himself. One day, when military duties were over for a time, and Phil lay stretched in the hammock in the shade, Baby crept into Gower's arms and fell asleep. I sat in a rocker near by, listening to the low, rich voice of the Welshman singing a lullaby so sweet and soft and crooning that Phil soon gave audible evidence of its efficacy, and followed Baby to dreamland.

"You sing well, Gower," I said, as he paused to shift Baby to an easier position.

"In Wales, mattam, all sing," said the man softly. "T'at wass te national air of my country, ant it wass callt 'Poor Mary Anne.' At home, mattam, I wass a harper."

"Did you earn your living so?"

"Oh, no. Many play harps in Wales. I wass carrier of te mail, mattam, petween Gower and Swansea."

That explained the reason of his excellent horsemanship, I mused, as I threaded my needle against the sunlighted glare of a waxen cactus bloom.

"Is Wales a beautiful country, Gower?"

"Oh—ay; most peautiful, wit lofty hills ant lufly falleys."

"And yet you left it willingly?" Giving another little dexterous tap to the wedge of curiosity.

"Neffer willingly, mattam. One toes not go from Paradise willingly. But if Efe leafs Atam tere iss no longer a place of pliss."

Baby stirred, and the gentle voice sang again Silence reigned once more, and I ventured a remark that set him to talking to me of himself. He was so frank, lacking in all self-consciousness as he spoke, seeming so much more a disinterested historian of some third person's fortunes, that I listened, inspired with an almost personal concern and sympathy, to the story of his lonely life.

After going back to the hard, unlovely childhood he had known, he hurried on to the time when he, a youth, left the valley farm, and accepted the proffered position of mail-carrier.

"Te riffer sometimes flooded te whole falley—little Tawy Riffer, it is callt, ant it wass tangerous to cross it at te forts. Put I have neffer hat accitent of any kint, mattam, ant wass so happy to always see in te great shatow of Craig-y-nos—just where a hut mate a white spot on te hill—te figure of my peautiful Nesta Glenellen stanting in te toorway wafing to me.

"To hear Nesta sing—tat wass to hear peforehand te angels of Heafen singing praises to te Creator. It wass set when we sang together, Nesta ant myself, tat te music of te spheres fount echo in our harmony. I know not of tat; put I know I wass always in Heafen when her voice soart wit my own to te chorts of my harp. Yet it was her voice, mattam, tat afterwarts mate for me tiss purgatory in which I now lif."

I looked at the face of the soldier, who, with gently swaying body, kept my little one hushed in slumber, and read therein signs of a patience bereft of all bitterness.

I was about to break the silence, when the sound of music was borne to us upon the waves of the warm, sunny air. It was the voice of the nuns singing in the little oratory, whose windows opened towards our quarters. The sounds that reached us first were subdued and indistinct; then grew in volume, until one at last could distinguish above all others a powerful, insistant soprano, clear as the note of a lark, sweet as the chiming of a silver bell, tender as the cadence of love itself, yet, for all that tenderness, as cold as crystal waters falling from a mountain's height.

With a bound, Comyn Gower started to his feet; but at Baby's startled cry he sank back again upon the box that was doing duty for a chair, soothing the child with endearments in unpronounceable Welsh.

"Nesta sang like te foice you now hear, mattam—tat foice above te otters. Te same timper, full, lout, sweet—put tiss lacks in glatness. It iss a fine foice, foteffer, ant iss mucht te same as Nesta's."

A long silence followed, during which we both listened to the Sisters' singing. At its end, I said:

"What is it all about, Gower?"

"It is tat of which I neffer speak; put I should like to tell you, mattam, if you pe pleast to hear."

"Thank you, Gower; my sympathy is yours, believe me."

"It is goot of you, mattam. I shall feel petter when you know. Nesta liffet quite near Craig-y-nos castle, where dwelt Mattam Nicolini, te great singer——"

"Do you mean Patti, Gower—our Adelina Patti?" I interrupted eagerly.

"I to, mattam. She came to Wales, pecause she knew te air of my natif country wass pest for toes tat sing, as iss provet py the singers we poast in our own homes. She spent much money to improfe te castle, and liffet in splendour."

This I had every reason to believe was true.

"When Nesta came home as my pride, yes, mattam, we were marriet—I tought te gates of Heafen itself were opening pefore me. I still rote wit te mails, put came home for ofer Suntay, upon which happy tay we sang togetter in te little chapel in te falley.

"Once one of Mattam Nicolini's house party—a man—came to te chapel, ant, hearing Nesta, sought her out, ant wass fery praiseful ant friendly. I tit not tisagree when she talt me, a week after, tat he swore to her tat her foice wass superior to te 'teeva's,' as he callt his hostess; put when she sat he offert a pig sum of money to go wit him ant sing in great cities, I set, 'No; Nesta

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tat will not to.' Te light went out of her prown eyes, ant she set no more.

"Put te serpent had enteret my Eten. One tay I rote home to fint my house—wass empty." The head of the speaker fell upon his breast, and the voice grew still. Baby stirred, reaching up a little fat hand until it touched the quivering lips of the man who held him in tender embrace.

"I was more guilty tan she," he added hoarsely, "for I tit not seek to safe her."

That was all Comyn Gower told me of his past, but it sufficed.

Every day Philip had some new praise to sing of him, and every day Baby lorded it over what he soon came to look upon as his own personal property.

Why do all days of the year's calender seem, as we glance them over, so all alike, their black figures bespeaking no hint of the joy, the terror, the delight, or the despair they are to bring to us?

Slowly the time drew on, a fatal number of a day burdened with woe for me creeping nearer and nearer, until the symbol that should have been printed in blood-red characters—fit presage of a direful doing—stood dumbly and dully to represent the resplendent breaking of a glorious April day.

Phil had gone about his duties as officer of the day, and Gower was in attendance upon him. I gave Baby his breakfast, then bade him wait for mamma outside, and we would go "bye-bye" to see Sister Dolorosa. He vouchsafed me his usual grunt of acquiescence, and went out into the open air. I wished to carry with me a certain length of linen I had gone purposely to purchase at Laredo the day before, but having mislaid the little flat bundle, was forced to make a lengthy search for it. When, at last, I found it, I called to Baby as I emerged into the hot, sunny air, glad to be off and away to the cool cloisters of the convent.

But no Baby answered.

In vain I searched for him, expecting to come upon him at every turn. Growing alarmed, I sought Philip, who, I was informed, was not then to be interrupted.

In his stead Gower came to me, and when I told him of my terrible anxiety, dashed past me with a face as white as death, and disappeared in the direction of the stables.

Very soon—ages it seemed to me—Philip came, and, in a twinkling "Boots and Saddles" was signalled, and half the command, following Philip, left the post.

Time goes by heart-throbs. I lived several long lives before that afternoon, when the men came galloping in, cheering like mad. I knew, then, that Baby was safe, and ran to clasp him in my arms before the awful mist I felt closing round me should swallow my failing senses.

Comyn Gower had tracked Jorge Mejos to a mezquite grove some miles away, and, after a savage struggle, had rescued Baby from his abductor. But the gentle saviour of my son was mortally wounded, and lay across his horse an inert mass of senseless flesh.

I moaned in anguish as, by Philip's orders, they brought the dying man into our quarters, and cried aloud that he should not die—alas! alas!

All night he lay as one asleep; but at dawn the fierce fever the surgeon dreaded set in, and I, overwrought by the long and terrible strain to which Fate added this cruel sorrow, gave up the consciousness I was battling hard to keep, and swooned away.

When again I opened my eyes, Phil was standing beside me, bathing my forehead.

"Now, little woman, go to sleep and rest you. Gower is much easier, and you are about used up. I have sent for Sister Ursula and Sister Dolorosa to watch beside the—dear—soul,"—the tears in Philip's voice shook me to the foundation of my being—"and if he grows worse, I'll wake you. Come, close your eyes—that's right—that's right!"

I did sleep and the slumber was a heavy, dreamless lethargy that rested and soothed me. Many hours passed, and at their end I started to my feet.

It was dark. In the next apartment I could hear a soft voice saying:

"Yes, Nesta, it is Easter day, and you must sing te song of te Ressurection. Ant te mattam, whose foice iss like your own, will gif you lilies for te chapel. She has many in te glass house py te castle, and she iss generous. Put you must not talk to him—you hear me, Nesta?"

I softly approached the door. Sister Dolorosa knelt, saying prayers for the dying man, whose eyes roved ever to the light of the taper on the further side of the bed. Sister Ursula had disappeared. Before I could move nearer, the voice began again, but oh, so faintly—so faintly!

"Yes, Nesta, te Easter lilies are like yourself—so pure! Tat is a pig armful you carry, ant I like to see tem apout you. Sing wit me, put first kiss me, my wife—my pride!"

With sudden start, Sister Dolorosa sprang to her feet, and, leaning above the whitening face, laid her beautiful lips upon his own. I looked on as one looks at the performance of some divine miracle. I could not move as again and again she kissed the brow, the eyes, the mouth of the dying man. No sound escaped her, and when the noise of an approach assailed her ears, she fell again upon her knees and murmured Latin prayers.

Comyn Gower died at dawn. In the afternoon of the same day two shadows darkened the door of the room where the wan house of a freed soul lay untenanted, and Sister Ursula, followed by Sister Dolorosa, entered the presence of death.

The elder woman soon passed out again, but the younger, approaching the bier, let fall upon the still, cold form the great bouquet of Easter lilies she had brought, and wrung her hands above them.

It was more than I could bear. My heart, filled with its own personal sorrow, overflowed at the profound pitifulness of this futile meeting of the two erring, hungry souls, and reaching out my arms to the woman, I wept aloud.

At my cry she turned to me, and, throwing her slender arms round my neck, held me close while her whole being shook convulsively.

Then, without one look at the still face whiter than the lilies lying about us, the black-robed nun loosed her close hold upon me, and as she went out into the hot glare of the April sunshine, I called softly after her:

"God's peace go with you, Nesta Gower!"

Cora Best.

Result of Watch Competition.

No. 4.

The correct time in the Watch Competition, No. 4, was 1hr. 23min. 35sec.

The winner was Mr. Sam B. Jones, 12, Aquarium Street, Rhyl.

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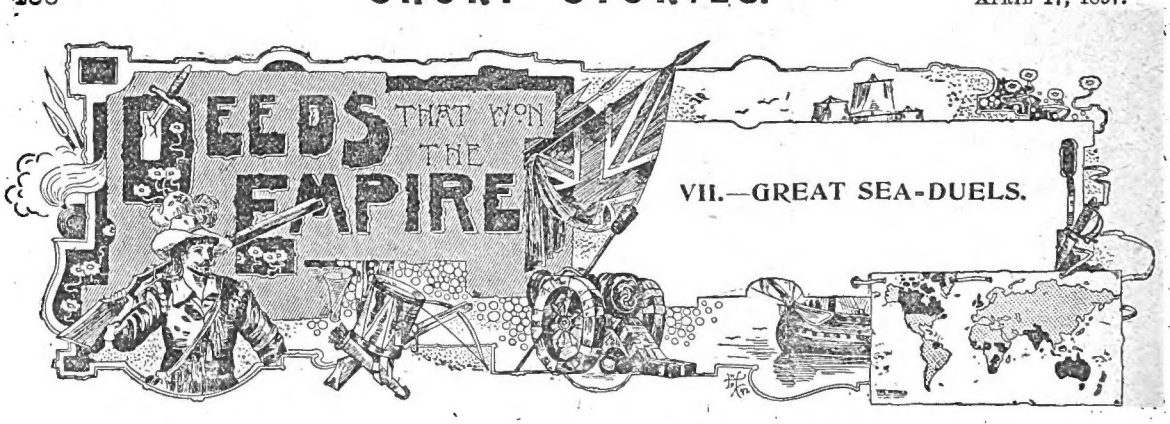

British naval history is rich in the records of what may be called great sea-duels—combats of single ship against single ship, waged often with extraordinary fierceness and daring. They resemble the combat of knight against knight, with flash of cannon instead of thrust of lance, and the floor of the lonely sea for the trampled lists.

He must have a very slow-beating imagination who cannot realise the picturesqueness of these ancient sea-duels. Two frigates, cruising for prey, catch the far-off gleam of each other's topsails over the rim of the horizon. They approach each other warily—two high-sniffing sea-mastiffs. A glimpse of fluttering colour—the red flag and the *drapeau blanc*, or the Union Jack and the tricolour—reveals to each ship its foe. The men stand grimly at quarters, the captain, with perhaps a solitary lieutenant, and a middy as aide-de-camp, is on his quarter-deck.

There is the manœuvring for the weather gauge, the thunder of the sudden broadside, the hurtle and crash of the shot, the stern, quick word of command, as the clumsy guns are run in to be reloaded and fired again and again with furious haste. The ships drift into closer wrestle. Masts and yards come tumbling on to the blood-splashed decks.

There is the grinding shocks of the great wooden hulls as they meet, the wild leap of the boarders, the clash of cutlass on cutlass, the shout of victory, the sight of the fluttering flag as it sinks reluctantly from the mizzen of the beaten ship. Then the smoke drifts away, and, on the tossing sea-floor, lie, little better than dismantled wrecks, victor and vanquished.

No great issue perhaps ever hung upon these lonely sea combats, but as object-lessons in the qualities by which the Empire has been won, and by which it must be maintained, these ancient sea-fights have real and permanent value. What better examples of cool hardihood, of chivalrous loyalty to the flag, of self-reliant energy, need be imagined or desired? The generation that carries the heavy burden of the Empire to-day cannot afford to forget the tale of such exploits.

One of the most famous frigate fights in British history is that between the *Arethusa* and *La Belle Poule*, fought off Brest on June 17th, 1778. Who is not familiar with the name and fame of "the saucy *Arethusa*"? Yet there is a curious absence of detail as to the fight. The combat, indeed, owes its enduring fame to two somewhat irrelevant circumstances—first, that it was fought when France and England were not actually at war, but were trembling on the verge of it. The sound of the *Arethusa's* guns, indeed, was the signal of war between the two nations.

The other fact is that an ingenious rhymster—scarcely a poet—crystallised the fight into a set of verses in which there is something of the true smack of the sea, and an echo, if not of the cannon's roar, yet of the rough-voiced mirth of the fo'castle; and the sea-fight lies embalmed; so to speak, and made immortal in the sea-song.

The *Arethusa* was a stumpy little frigate, scanty in crew, light in guns, attached to the fleet of Admiral Keppel, then cruising off Brest. Keppel had as perplexed and delicate a charge as was ever intrusted to a British Admiral. Great Britain was at war with her American colonies, and there was every sign that France intended to add herself to the fight. No fewer than thirty-two sails of the line and twelve frigates were gathered in Brest roads, and another fleet of almost equal strength in Toulon.

Spain, too, was slowly collecting a mighty armament. What would happen to England if the Toulon and Brest fleets united, were joined by a third fleet from Spain, and the mighty array of ships thus collected swept up the British Channel? On June 13th, 1778, Keppel, with twenty-one ships of the line and three frigates, was dispatched to keep watch over the Brest fleet. War had not been proclaimed, but Keppel was to prevent a junction of the Brest and Toulon fleets, by persuasion if he could, but by gunpowder in the last resort!

Keppel's force was much inferior to that of the Brest fleet, and as soon as the topsails of the British ships were visible from the French Coast two French frigates—the *Licorne*, and *La Belle Poule*—with two lighter craft bore down upon them to reconnoitre. But Keppel could not afford to let the French Admiral know his exact force, and signalled to his own outlying ships to bring the French frigates under his lee.

At nine o'clock at night the *Licorne* was overtaken by the *Milford*, and with some rough sailorly persuasion, and a hint of broadsides, her head was turned towards the British fleet. The next morning, in the grey dawn, the Frenchman, having meditated on affairs during the night, made a wild dash for freedom. The *America*, an English 64-double—that is, the *Licorne's* size—overtook her and fired a shot across her bow to bring her to.

Longford, the captain of the *America*, stood on the gunwale of his own ship politely urging the captain of the *Licorne* to return with him. With a burst of Celtic passion the French captain fired his whole broadside into the big Englishman and then—instantly hauled down his flag so as to escape any answering broadside.

Meanwhile the *Arethusa* was in eager pursuit of the *Belle Poule*—a fox-terrier chasing a mastiff! The *Belle*

Poule was a splendid ship, with heavy metal, and a crew more than twice as numerous as that of the tiny *Arethusa*. But Marshall, its captain, was a singularly good sailor, and not the man to count odds. The song tells the story of the fight in an amusing fashion:

Come all ye jolly sailors bold,
Whose hearts are cast in honour's mould,
While England's glory I unfold.
Huzza to the *Arethusa*.
She is a frigate tight and brave,
As ever stemmed the dashing wave;
Her men are staunch
To their fav'rite launch,
And when the foe shall meet our fire,
Sooner than strike we'll all expire
On board the *Arethusa*.
On deck five hundred men did dance,
The stoutest they could find in France.
We, with two hundred, did advance
On board the *Arethusa*.
Our captain hailed the Frenchman, "Ho!"
The Frenchman he cry'd out, "Hallo!"
"Bear down, d'ye see
To our Admiral's lee."
"No, no," says the Frenchman, "that can't be."
"Then I must lug you along with me,"
Says the saucy *Arethusa!*

As a matter of fact Marshall hung doggedly on the Frenchman's quarter for two long hours, fighting a ship twice as big as his own. The *Belle Poule* was eager to escape; Marshall was resolute that it should not escape; and, try as he might, the Frenchman, during that fierce two hours' wrestle, failed to shake off his tiny but dogged antagonist.

The *Arethusa's* masts were shot away, its jib-boom hung a tangled wreck over its bows, its bulwarks were shattered, its decks were splashed red with blood, half its guns were dismounted, and nearly every third man in its crew struck down. But still it hung, with quenchless and obstinate courage, on the *Belle Poule's* quarter, and, by its perfect seamanship, and the quickness and the deadly precision with which its lighter guns worked, reduced its towering foe to a condition of wreck almost as complete as its own. The terrier, in fact, was proving too much for the mastiff.

Suddenly the wind fell. With topmasts hanging over the side, and canvas torn to ribbons, the *Arethusa* lay shattered and motionless on the sea. The shot-torn but loftier sails of the *Belle Poule*, however, yet held wind enough to drift her out of the reach of the *Arethusa's* fire. Both ships were close under the French cliffs, but the *Belle Poule*, like a broken-winged bird, struggled into a tiny cove in the rocks, and nothing remained for the *Arethusa* but to cut away her wreckage, hoist what sail she could, and drag herself sullenly back under jury masts to the British fleet.

But the story of the two hours' heroic fight, maintained against such odds, sent a thrill of grim exultation through Great Britain. Menaced by the combination of so many mighty states, while her sea-dogs were of this fighting temper, what had great Britain to fear? In the streets of many a British seaport, and in many a British fo'castle, the story of how the *Arethusa* fought was sung in deep-throated chorus:

The fight was off the Frenchman's land;
We forced them back upon their strand;
For we fought till not a stick would stand
Of the gallant *Arethusa!*

A fight even more dramatic in its character is that fought on August 10th, 1805, between the *Phœnix* and the *Didon*. The *Didon* was one of the finest and fastest French frigates afloat, armed with guns of special calibre, and manned by a crew which formed perhaps the very *élite* of the French Navy. The men had been especially picked to form the crew of the only French ship which was commanded by a Bonaparte, the *Pomone*, selected for the command of Captain Jerome Bonaparte.

Captain Jerome Bonaparte, however, was not just now afloat, and the *Didon* had been selected, on account of its great speed and heavy armament, for a service of great importance. She was manned by the crew chosen for the *Pomone*, placed under an officer of special skill and daring—Captain Milias—and dispatched with orders for carrying out one or more of those naval "combinations" which Napoleon often attempted, but never quite accomplished.

The *Didon*, in a word, was to bring up the Rochefort squadron to join the Franco-Spanish fleet under Villeneuve.

On that fatal August 10th, however, it seemed to Captain Milias that fortune had thrust into his hands a golden opportunity of snapping up a British sloop of war, and carrying her as a trophy into Rochefort. An American merchantman fell in with him, and its master reported that he had been brought to on the previous day by a British man-of-war, and compelled to produce his papers.

The American told the French captain that he had been allowed to go round the Englishman's decks and count his guns, omitting, no doubt, to add that he was half-drunk while doing it. Contemplated through an American's prejudices, inflamed with grog, the British ship seemed a very poor thing indeed. She carried, the American told the captain of the *Didon*, only twenty guns of light calibre, and her captain and officers were "so cocky" that, if they had a chance they would probably lay themselves alongside even the *Didon*, and become an easy prey.

The American pointed out to the eagerly-listening Frenchman the top-gallant sails of the ship he was describing showing above the sky-line to windward. Captain Milias thought he saw glory and cheap victory beckoning him, and he put his helm down, and stood under easy sail towards the fast-rising top-sails of the Englishman.

Now, the *Phœnix* was, perhaps, the smallest frigate in the British navy; a stocky little craft, scarcely above the rating of a sloop; and its captain, Baker, a man with something of Dundonald's gift for ruse, had disguised his ship so as to look as much as possible like a sloop. Baker, too, who believed that light guns quickly handled were capable of more effective mischief than the slow fire of heavier guns, had changed his heavier metal for 18-pounders.

The two ships, therefore, were very unequal in fighting force. The broadside of the *Didon* was nearly 50 per cent. heavier than that of the *Phœnix*; her crew was nearly 50 per cent. more numerous, and she was splendidly equipped at every point.

The yellow sides and royal yards rigged aloft told the "cocky" *Phœnix* that the big ship to leeward was a Frenchman, and, with all sails spread, she bore down in the chase. Baker was eager to engage his enemy to leeward, that she might not escape, and he held his fire till he could reach the desired position.

The *Didon*, however, a quick and weatherly ship, was able to keep ahead of the *Phœnix*, and thrice poured in a heavy broadside upon the grimly silent British ship without receiving a shot in reply. Baker's men were falling fast at their quarters, and, impatient at being both foiled and raked, he at last ran fiercely at his enemy

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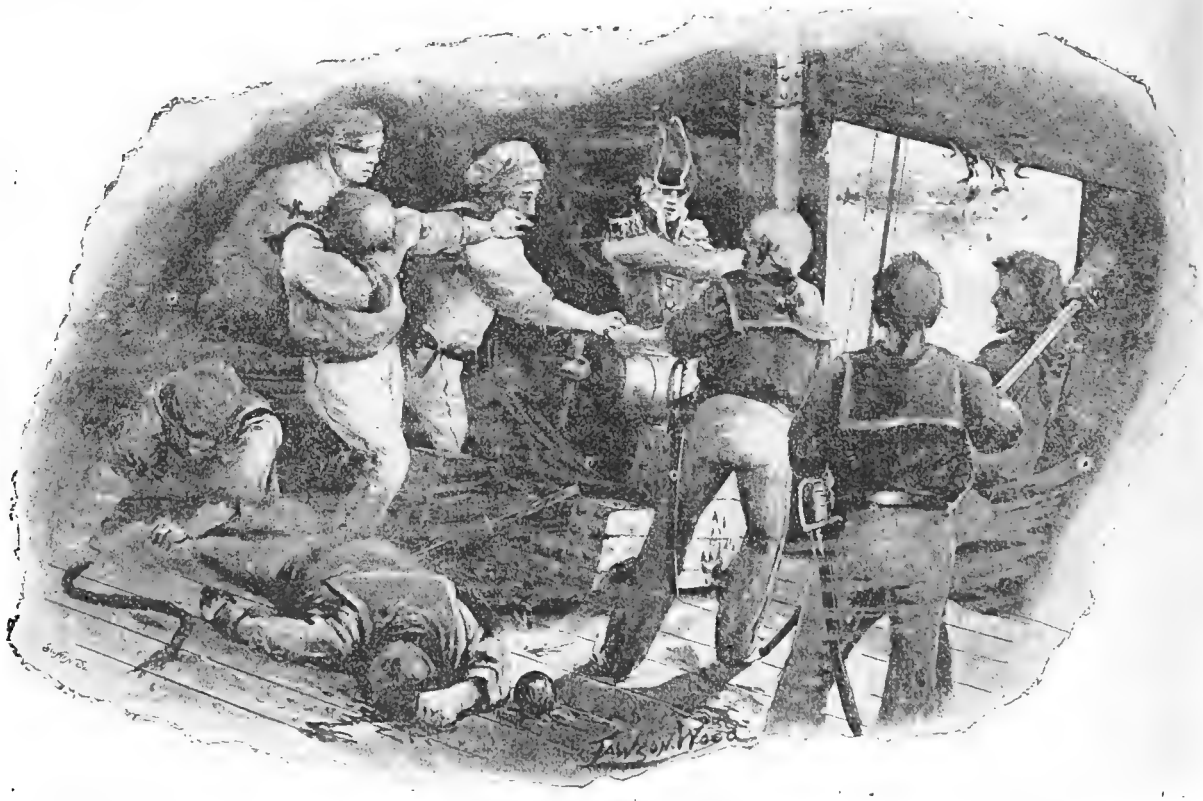
to windward. The heads of both ships swung parallel, and at pistol-distance broadside furiously answered broadside. In order to come up with her opponent, however, the *Phœnix* had all sail spread, and she gradually forged ahead. As soon as the two ships were clear, the *Didon*, by a fine stroke of seamanship, hauled up, crossed the stern of the *Phœnix* and raked her, and then repeated the pleasant operation.

The rigging of the *Phœnix* was so shattered that for a few minutes she was out of hand. Baker, however, was a fine seaman, and his crew were in a high state of discipline; and when carronade; this commanded the whole of the British ship, and with it the French opened a most destructive fire. The British ship, as it happened, could not bring a single gun to bear in return.

Baker, however, had fitted the cabin window on either quarter of his ship to serve as a port, in preparation for exactly such a contingency as this; and the after-most main deck was dragged into the cabin, the improvised port thrown open, and Baker himself, with a cluster of officers and men, was eagerly employed in fitting tackles to enable the gun to be worked. As the sides of the two ships were actually grinding together the Frenchmen



The men dropped in clusters.

the *Didon* once more bore up to rake her antagonist, the British ship, with her sails thrown back, evaded the Frenchman's fire. But the stem of the *Didon* smote with a crash on the starboard quarter of the *Phœnix*; the ships were lying parallel; the broadside of neither could be brought to bear. The Frenchmen, immensely superior in numbers, made an impetuous rush across their forecastle, and leapt on the quarter-deck of the *Phœnix*.

The marines of that ship, however, drawn up in a steady line across the deck, resisted the whole rush of the French boarders; and the British sailors, tumbling up from their guns, cutlass and boarding-pike in hand, and wroth with the audacity of the "French lubbers" daring to board "the cocky little *Phœnix*," with one rush pushed fiercely home, swept the Frenchmen back on to their own vessel.

On the French forecastle stood a brass 36-pounder saw the preparation being made; a double squad of marines was brought up at a run to the larboard gangway, and opened a swift and deadly fire into the cabin, crowded with English sailors busy rigging their guns.

The men dropped in clusters, the floor of the cabin was covered with the slain, its walls were splashed with blood; but Baker and the few men not yet struck down kept coolly to their task.

The gun was loaded under the actual flash of the French muskets, its muzzle was thrust through the port, and it was fired. Its charge of langridge swept the French ship from her larboard quarter, and struck down in an instant twenty-four men!

The deadly fire was renewed again and again, the British marines on the quarter-deck meanwhile keeping down with their musketry the fire of the great French carronade.

The fierce and bloody wrestle lasted for nearly thirty

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minutes, then the *Didon* began to fore-reach. Her great bowsprit ground slowly along the side of the *Phœnix*. It crossed the line of the second aftermost gun on the British deck. Its flames on the instant smote the Frenchman's head-rails to splinters, and destroyed the gammoning of her bowsprit.

Gun after gun of the two ships was brought in succession to bear; but in this close and deadly contest the *Phœnix* had the advantage. Her guns were lighter, her men better drilled, and their fierce energy overbore the Frenchmen. Presently the *Didon*, with her foremast tottering, her mainmast gone, her decks a blood-stained wreck, passed out of gunshot ahead.

In the tangle between the two ships the fly of the British white ensign at the gaff end dropped on the *Didon's* forecastle. The Frenchmen tore it off, and, as the ships moved apart, they waved it triumphantly from the *Didon's* stern. All the colours of the *Phœnix*, indeed, in one way or another had vanished, and the only response the exasperated British tars could make to the insult of the *Didon* was to immediately lash a boat's ensign to the larboard, and the Union Jack to the starboard end of their cross-jack yard-arm.

The wind had dropped; both ships were now lying in a semi-wrecked condition out of gunshot of each other, and it became a question of which could soonest repair damages and get into fighting condition again. Both ships, as it happened, had begun the fight with nearly all canvas spread, and from their splintered masts the sails now hung one wild net-work of rags. In each ship a desperate race to effect repairs begun.

On the Frenchman's decks arose a babel of sounds, the shouts of officers, the tumult of the men's voices. The British, on the other hand, worked in grim and orderly silence, with no sound but the cool stern orders of the officers. In such a race the British were sure to win, and fortune aided them. The two ships were rolling heavily in the windless swell, and a little before noon the British saw the wounded foremast of their enemy suddenly snap and tumble, with all its canvas, upon the unfortunate *Didon's* decks.

This gave new and exultant vigour to the British.

Shot holes were plugged, dismounted guns refitted, fresh braces rove, the torn rigging spliced, new canvas spread. The wind blew softly again, and a little after noon the *Phœnix*, sorely battered indeed, but in fighting trim, with guns loaded, and the survivors of her crew at quarters, bore down on the *Didon*, and took her position on that ship's weather bow. Just when the word "fire!" was about to be given, the *Didon's* flag fluttered reluctantly down; she had struck!

The toils of the *Phœnix*, however, were not even yet ended. The ship she had captured was practically a wreck, its mainmast tottering to its fall, while the prisoners greatly exceeded in numbers their captors. The little *Phœnix* courageously took her big prize in tow, and laid her course for Plymouth.

Once the pair of crippled frigates were chased by the whole of Villeneuve's fleet; once by a few chance words overheard, a plot amongst the French prisoners for seizing the *Phœnix* and then re-taking the *Didon* was detected—almost too late—and thwarted! The *Phœnix* and her prize reached Gibraltar when a thick fog lay on the Straits, a fog which, as the sorely-damaged ships crept through it, was full of the sound of signal guns and the ringing of bells. The Franco-Spanish fleet, in a word, a procession of giants, went slowly past the crippled ships in the fog, and never saw them!

Fell with a splash.

On September 3rd, however, the *Phœnix* safely brought her hard-won and stubbornly-guarded prize safely into Plymouth Sound.

The fight between the two ships was marked by many heroic incidents. During the action the very invalids in the sick-bay of the *Phœnix* crept from their cots and tried to take some feeble part in the fight. The purser is not actually part of the fighting staff of a ship, but the acting purser of the *Phœnix*, while her captain was in the smoke-filled cabin below, trying to rig up a gun to bear on the *Didon*, took charge of the quarter-deck, kept his post opposite the brazen mouth of the great carronade we have described, and, with a few marines, kept down the fire.

A little middy had the distinction of saving his captain's life. The *Didon's* bowsprit was thrust, like the shaft of a gigantic lance, over the quarter of the *Phœnix*, and a Frenchman, lying along it, levelled his musket at Captain Baker, not six paces distant, and took deliberate aim. A middy named Phillips, armed with a musket as big as himself, saw the levelled piece of the Frenchman; he gave his captain an unceremonious jostle aside, just as the Frenchman's musket flashed, and with almost the same movement, discharged his own piece at the enemy.

The French bullet tore off the brim of Captain Baker's hat, but the body of the man who fired it fell with a splash betwixt the two ships into the water. Here was a story indeed for a middy to tell, to the admiration of all the gun-rooms in the fleet.

The middy of the period, however, was half imp, half hero. Another youthful Nelson aged sixteen, at the hottest stage of the fight—probably at the moment the acting purser was in command on the quarter-deck—found an opportunity of getting at the purser's stores. With jaws widely distended, he was in the act of sucking—in the fashion so delightful to boys—a huge orange, when a musket ball, after passing through the head of a seaman, went clean through both the youth's distended cheeks—and this without touching a single tooth!

(*Next week*, "*The Blood-stained Hill of Busaco.*")

The Shadow Hand

By Louis Tracy

CHAPTER XXII.

The Coffin.

There are poisons so subtle that the least conceivable portion entering the blood on a pin's point will produce the convulsions of death. The blood will congeal to a putrid cream. The limbs will curl and shoot for agony.

Lucretia Borgia had a ring furnished with a tiny poisoned prick, with which she shook hands with such of her guests as she wished to die.

"What is it?" said Arthur.

Nature has secrets and resources which can only be described as ghastly. You meet with them on the road to the Abyss.

On contact with this dark chemistry many human brains reel with frenzy.

In this scientific witchcraft Dr. Danton was an adept. In the middle ages there were drugs known to the learned of such marvellous operation that it is no wonder if they were regarded as diabolical agencies. Men hardly dared speak of them in the open day to each other; if anyone dared to *write* of them, he did it timorously, in cryptograms and symbols. A great part of his life Danton had spent in trying to decipher such hidden lore.

The condition known as the *Somnus Angelorum*—the Sleep of the Angels—is produced by a drug which probably few living men of science could prepare. The body stiffens into the rigour of death; all the bodily functions cease totally. Only the brain remains clear; the mind is active; the senses are acute. But the victim can no more lift an eyelash than he could blow away the moon with a breath.

When Arthur on the appointed Friday at a quarter to three arrived at No. 11, Rue Taitbout, he was suprised to see that the house was apparently untenanted. Why had Danton appointed such a place for the meeting? A faint suspicion, a vague uneasiness, passed like a mist through his mind. But he was not a man given to fears. He stood with one foot on the front steps, waiting. His face showed no agitation—but his heart was thumping in his bosom. He was about to see—*her*.

The front door opened above him, and there stood Danton's great body, calling to him to enter.

"What is it?" said Arthur. "I prefer, thank you, to remain here till the lady arrives."

"Pray—enter," said Danton.

"I will stay here."

"If it pleases you, certainly. But the lady is already within."

"I do not believe one word of it."

Danton bowed.

"It is true, nevertheless."

Arthur's heart was fluttering. She was here, already! He could divine no motive for the lie.

"You say she is here?"

"I have said it."

"That, on your honour?"

"By all means."

"You have no honour, Danton. But I suppose a human creature can't lie in that way."

He mounted the stone steps. He entered. The door banged ominously behind him, moaning through the hollow house.

"This way, please," said Danton.

He led the way through three large apartments, then up a flight of uncarpeted wooden stairs, towards the back of the mansion.

They stood at length in a bare room. In it was nothing but a low kind of platform at one end. On this platform stood a small vial containing a greenish liquid, a wine-glass, and a long black coffin, the lid of which leant up against the wall.

Danton, as they walked in, shut the door behind him; then, with a hideous laugh, holding out his arm, he said:

"Shake hands!"

"You frightful ruffian! what is the meaning of this insolence?" cried Arthur.

Danton had a huge ring on his middle finger. He did not reply, but with his palm he struck Arthur on the back of his hand.

In less than a minute Arthur had turned pale, and tottered faint towards the wall.

Danton emitted a whistle, and Hawke entered the room.

"Hold him, Hawke, while I give him these few drops." Danton walked towards the platform, very carefully measured out ten drops from the vial into the glass, and poured them down Arthur's throat, while Hawke supported him.

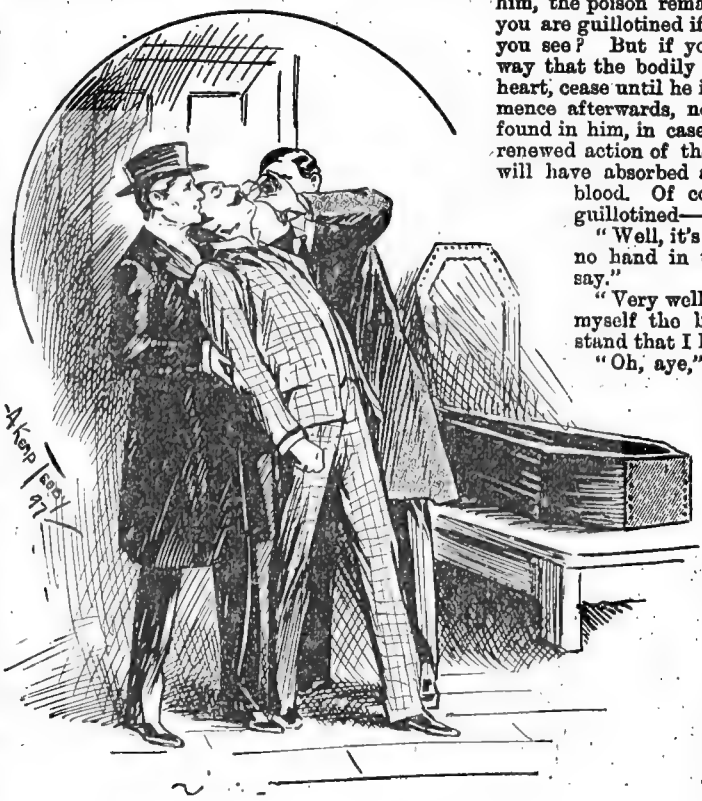
Arthur suddenly felt his consciousness revive. His brain cleared; he knew that there was Danton watching him. He knew that he was leaning on another man. He tried to stand upright, but his weight seemed to have grown too heavy for him. He waited a moment, and said to himself: "*Now* I will stand up!" But he could no more move a muscle, or the atom of a muscle, than he could fly. His body was fixed and stiff in death. He tried to look round. His eyes would not move. He had a will, an intelligence, but his frame no longer owned them. He was living in the tomb of himself, in a prison of flesh that had turned to granite.

Danton touched with his forefinger the ball of Arthur's glazed and lifeless eyes.

"*That* is all right," he murmured.

Arthur heard him speak, knew that he had touched his eyes, but the eyes did not flinch to the millionth part of an inch.

Danton put his ear to his heart—to his chest.



Poured them down Arthur's throat.

"*Those* are all right," he murmured. "They have quite ceased to act. Hold his shoulders, Hawke."

Hawke took his shoulders, Danton his feet. They bore and laid him in the coffin, and over the coffin they settled the lid. Arthur tried to shriek; he could as soon have lifted the earth.

"Is he dead, mate?" asked Hawke, as he and Danton walked away.

"Dead, no! He will shake himself out of that in thirty-six hours' time, and be as hearty as you or I."

"But he will be under the ground by that time, won't he?"

"Certainly."

"Why not kill the poor lad outright, and spare him all that misery? Look here, I tell you plain, mate, I don't like this job."

"You are a fool, Hawke. If you poison a man and kill him, the poison remains in his stomach; and you are guillotined if his stomach is searched, you see? But if you poison him in such a way that the bodily functions, the lungs, the heart, cease until he is buried, and then recommence afterwards, no trace of poison will be found in him, in case of exhumation; for the renewed action of the functions in the grave will have absorbed all the poison into the blood. Of course, if you *wish* to be guillotined——"

"Well, it's nothing to me. I've got no hand in the matter, that's all I say."

"Very well, Mr. Hawke, I take upon myself the burden. But you understand that I leave you to-night?"

"Oh, aye," said Hawke; "it's all very fine for you to be going down to your grand château in the country with this girl, and leave me to do all the dirty burial work."

"By no means," said Lemaitre. "*I* have done all the work that is necessary. The books at Père Lachaise were signed two days ago; a friend upon whose discretion you may rely looked to that for me. He believed, in fact, that he was signing for a grave for a pauper lunatic whom I formerly attended. Nothing remains to be done except to accompany the hearse to the cemetery."

"That would be a fine job for Wheeler to nab me on, wouldn't it?"

"Wheeler must not 'nab' you. You have gone out before, since your trick upon him, in a close carriage—why can you not go to-morrow?"

"Oh, very well, I'll risk it. But suppose, after all, the girl won't go with you to the country?"

"She will, Mr. Hawke."

"I doubt it myself."

"She will come. My care for her will make her love me. I shall make her rich promises, Mr. Hawke, a stately country house after her poverty, perfect solitude——"

"*That* promise, anyway, will be made like pie-crusts, to be broken."

"What, sir! Did you ever know me to break a promise, and to the lady of my heart, you villain? No! she

shall, I say, have perfect solitude—for some weeks, at any rate, until she learns to look for me, to long for me. I shall go away, I shall travel. When I return to her she will have learnt to trust me utterly, to love me madly, Mr. Hawke."

"I like your big talk, I do!" said Hawke. "Suppose she runs away from the château?"

"I have made full provision for that, Hawke. I can trust my servants, sir. She will be watched and guarded."

"Do you know," said Hawke meditatively, "I've once or twice thought that this here girl is really the daughter of your wife by her first husband?"

"You idiot! What wife?"

"Why, Julie."

"Hold your tongue, you beast, or I shall knock every tooth down your vile throat!"

"All right, mate. Strikes me you don't much like hearing that word 'Julie' mentioned, do you? But this here girl, Edith, greatly favours you in the face, you know; no one can say she don't."

"Do you mean to say she is like me?"

"I do."

"It is the affinity between us, you idiot. We are made out of the same piece—our two souls—our two bodies."

"Oh, that's all very fine! But when I showed her that photo of your—your—Julie, do you know she said 'yes—that *is* my mother?' Now, that wur very strange, you know."

"She did not see the picture well, I suppose," said Lemaitre musingly; "and there *may*, in truth, have been some resemblance between her mother—and—and—the other woman. You are talking nonsense, sir!"

No suspicion had ever yet crossed Lemaitre's mind that Edith was the daughter of Julie; for Julie had carefully concealed from him the fact that she had ever had a daughter.

At this point there was a knock at the front door. It was Edith.

Expecting to meet Arthur, she fainted into Lemaitre's arms on seeing him come to the door.

He bore her to the only furnished room in the house, and laid her on a couch. It was a room next to that in which Arthur lay.

For a long time Arthur, stretched in his coffin, heard the occasional tones of her voice, though he could not catch the words. Toward evening, two hours afterwards, she drove away in a carriage with Lemaitre, bound for his newly-purchased château in far Provence. In her eyes was the wild and weak look of mesmeric ecstasy.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Search.

All that afternoon, Cécile, at the Hôtel Anglais, was waiting for Arthur; he had made a new appointment with her, but he did not come.

About nine Tom Wilson was ushered into her presence in her suite of apartments on the first floor.

Cécile was cross. Jack Heathcote was sitting woebegone at the other end of the room, banished from her.

"Well, Tom, what have you?"

"A'm no that easy in my moind about Captain Musgrave," said Tom. "He went oot and said he'd be back long since."

"He promised to be here, Tom. One can do nothing. Why do you come to me in your trouble?"

"A always do, 'ee knoa. Didst thoo no tell me to look well after t' Captain?"

"And you do, I think, Tom? Because you are *good*, eh? as one *said* you were?"

"That's neither here nor there, Cécile Delisle. Wot A've got to say is, thot o' Tuesday evening, A went oot after him, having naught to do, keeping an eye, 'ee knoa, in this ootlandish pleace; and A see that lump of a man, Dr. Danton, they call him—get from his carriage, and have speech with t' Captain. A doan't loike thot Danton at all."

"No, Tom? Is it so, yes? Then you *are* my very boy! *I* don't like him, too!"

"A thought not. Danton showed him some newspapers. A heerd them say as they shoold meet again. Thot's aboot all A've to tell."

Some newspapers! Cécile spent a sleepless night in her chair. For his first breach of his appointment with her, Arthur had been profuse in apologies. If he broke a *second* appointment, what could she think? She must think that he broke it because he could not, by any possibility, keep it.

But she could dream of nothing that could prevent him, except physical inability; and she went over in her mind all the various forms of such physical inability, rejecting the far-fetched. He was not dangerously ill, except through some accident, which was unlikely; he was not detained in prison. He was bound by some artificial force, by private hands—or he was dead. If he were dead, he was murdered.

She did not need the information of Tom Wilson to make her think of Danton as the source of the mischief. Yet she knew nothing against Danton. Was the man capable of committing a crime, as his close comrade, Lemaitre, had been?

In the morning, early, she rose, washed, and hurried in a cab to Arthur's hotel. He had not come home. She took Tom Wilson, who was walking to and fro in front of the hotel façade, into the cab with her, and made straight for Père Lachaise cemetery.

She left Tom in the cab at the gates, and walked rapidly towards the bureau of the *Archiviste des Sépulcres*. An old woman who was sweeping near the entrance told her that she was too early by an hour.

For an hour, in an agony of impatience, she walked about among the avenues of stately monuments and streets of tombs. When at last she entered the bureau and asked for the *archiviste*, one of the clerks sitting at a table led her along a passage, up some stairs, and ushered her into a room of many shelves, stocked with dusty documents. An old man in a scull-cap sat reading at a table.

"I wish to know if you have appointed any grave within the last day or two on a death certificate delivered by a Dr. Danton," said Cécile.

The old man searched a pile of papers. Then he opened a pig-skin volume, and ran his finger down a column of "D's" on a page.

"Not only is the answer to your question no," he said; "but there is no such doctor as Dr. Danton in Paris at all."

"Then I give notice," answered Cécile, "that in case of such a death-certificate being handed in, there will be a necessity for investigation——"

"But your notice is useless. There being no such doctor here, the Registrar of Deaths would refuse to pass the certificate on to me, mademoiselle."

"But what am I to do, then, m'sieur? I have a fear that an Englishman, by name Arthur Musgrave, may have met foul play in Paris——"

"That is a matter for the police, mademoiselle. It is entirely beyond my province."

Cécile turned and walked sharply away. "It is *not* a matter for the police," she said inwardly. "It is a matter for instant action—for desperate effort, by *me*. So 'Danton' is not his real name, then?"

She hurried back to Tom Wilson, and scribbled in pencil on the unused half of a note, which she took from her pocket, the words:

"Get quickly *all* the Paris papers since Monday last, and search in the advertisements for the name of Edith. Will see you at one."

She handed it to Tom, and told him to take it at once to Jack Heathcote at the Hôtel Anglais. The newspapers which Tom Wilson had seen Danton showing to Arthur!

Her quick instinct told her that there, if anywhere, would light be found.

As Tom rolled away in his cab, she hailed another, and set off in a different direction. Her first point of aim was the Tribunal de Police in the Rue de St. Sepulcre, where she merely stated her case, briefly mentioning the disappearance of Arthur, with a description of the man calling himself "Danton." Then she procured a list of the cemeteries in Paris and its environs, and began a wild career from district to district, collecting items of infor-

"What am I to do, then, m'sieur?"

mation about all the burials to take place within the next few days, with the address of the bodies, and the causes of death.

Sharp at one she was back to the Hôtel Anglais. Jack was waiting for her in her rooms; he pointed to the *Courier de Soir*, and the advertisements appointing a meeting at the Rue Taitbout.

Cécile threw herself on a couch, face downwards, her hands covering her face; and for half-an-hour lay so thinking.

"Stupid!" she cried at last, springing up. "I have wasted a whole morning: what I undertook was just endless. Arthur is at the Rue Taitbout, of course—alive or dead. Come."

She, with Heathcote, rode in a front cab; behind, Tom Wilson and three *agents de police*, whom Cécile picked up on her way; two of them were already in search for Arthur; and all of them drove at high speed toward the Rue Taitbout.

At No. 11 Cecile stopped, flew up the steps, and knocked. The other five followed her, and waited round the door. There was no answer. The truncheons of the police began pounding clamorously at the door, the whole street echoing with the alarm. But there was no answer. . . . The shoulders of the five men went urging at the door; it was heavy, but old; with many a jerky swing their invading shoulders gained slowly upon its tense resistance; there was a creaking—a sudden ripping of wood—and they tumbled in through the splintered door, victorious.

They rushed different ways through the house, searching every cranny of it; but they found it empty.

An hour before, Arthur, lying in the stiffness and pallor of death in his coffin, had heard the screws turn and groan in the lid which shut the light from him. The thunders of the Day of Doom itself could not have affected him with half the horror inspired by this simple sound.

Ten minutes later, if anyone had peeped within that coffin, the hair of the coffined man would have been seen to have turned to the whiteness of untrodden snow.

At the moment when the door of No. 11, Rue Taitbout, was being ripped to shivers, Arthur was hearing the heavy, wet clods of the grave falling in dull thuds upon his coffin-lid. His imprisoned spirit went mad, and swooned.

Hawke had seen to it that the funeral took place at an early hour. Old gaol-bird as he was, his tough conscience was ill at ease at his deed. He had made up his mind to have an afternoon of hopeless drunkenness—a grand time; and as soon as he saw the coffin lifted from the hearse at the grave-side, he called to the driver of his close carriage, and drove away to Lemaitre's mansion in the Rue de Rome. Here he had the choice of many forms of delight, and before long was lying on a couch, singing, laughing, and drunk

As Cécile walked hurriedly about the rooms of No. 11, Rue Taitbout, her wits, which had hardly been as clear that day as usual owing to the confusion of her terror and dismay, sprang up into vividest life. She felt that it was a case of now or never. "Oh, I must not be a blind fool this day—this day of all days!" she said to herself. She called one of the gendarmes, and, pointing to the ground, said: "Look there!"

"What, mademoiselle?"

What she showed him was so faint that he had to stoop quite low down to see it. It was the damp mark of a footstep nearly dry on the uncarpeted floor. It had been raining a little that morning.

Yet, small and indistinct as the marks of the footsteps were, she astounded the officer by saying five minutes later:

"There have been no fewer than three men here within the last hour. And they were bearing a heavy burden."

"Is that so, mad'moiselle?" said the man.

"Yes. If you look closely, you will see that the marks on the floor are characterised in three distinct ways by the three pairs of feet; and the random direction of the footfalls lead one to guess that they were struggling under a burden."

In another minute she raised an outcry which brought them all round her. She had entered the room from which the coffin had been removed.

"See there!" she cried, pointing to the low, dust-covered platform, "that is where the coffin stood. It has left its distinct shape marked out in the dust!"

"To the cemetery—quick!" cried one of the men.

"But *which* cemetery?" asked Cécile.

"Père Lachaise. That is where a person from this district would most likely be interred."

In a quarter of an hour they had dashed through the streets and stood before the *archiviste*.

"What you ask is impossible," he said to their representation; "twenty-five persons have been buried here this morning. To exhume the whole of them would be nothing short of an outrage upon the twenty-four."

Before this dilemma the search-party stood dumb. But Cécile had a sudden thought.

"You say that 'Danton' is not among the certified doctors of Paris. Will you see, then, if 'Lemaitre' is?"

"Yes," said the *archiviste*, "I know the name. One of to-day's certificates is actually signed by him."

"Then the body for which he signed is the body we want!" cried Cecile.

In five minutes an order for exhumation was in her hand; in thirty the white, dead face of Arthur appeared before her. The girl was leaning pallid and faint on Jack Heathcote.

"Is that the Englishman, mademoiselle?"

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"Yes—no, no, that is not he! His hair is white—is white as snow." Then with a sudden shriek: "Yes, see his eyelid! He lives! he lives! It is Arthur! Oh, God!"

Her eyes closed, she sighed, and fainted.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Schooner.

Four days later, towards evening, she stood with him at the railway station, the Gare du Nord. Arthur was sitting inside the train, and Cécile stood talking at the window.

"Well," she said, "if you will be cruel and obstinate I cannot prevent you; but you have not, I think, the right to go fighting in Egypt just now."

"Dear Miss Delisle," he said, "how good you are, and wise, and strong! But I feel as well as ever I did; my hand, I admit, shakes a little."

He held it out and it trembled. He was a changed Arthur Musgrave—that was clear. If Dr. Lemaitre had seen him now with his white hair he would no longer have said that he was "playing the child"; the grave had made of him a full man—a developed man. The over-fine well-bred languor of manner was gone, and as he held out his shaking hand with a smile, his eyes were lifted to Heaven in gratitude, and a tear dropped from them.

"Well, if you will go, you will go," said Cécile, "but is it kind to Edith?"

"One must do one's duty," he said. "Edith is with Dr. Danton. It his her own will, I assure you. I told you I heard the tones of her voice speaking to him, from the coffin. They were sad and subdued tones, I admit, but I am sure that they were not *angry* tones. She has chosen her own way."

"But you do not doubt that she loves you?"

"I must doubt it—I cannot but doubt it. Yes, decidedly, I doubt it."

Cécile sighed.

"It is no good speaking of it," she said; "some day you may know better. God keep you—good-bye."

He wrung her hand. The train was whistling to start.

But before she turned away, she called Tom Wilson out of the carriage, and led him a little way from it.

"Tom," she said, "I want you to promise me something. You will look well after the Captain, I think?"

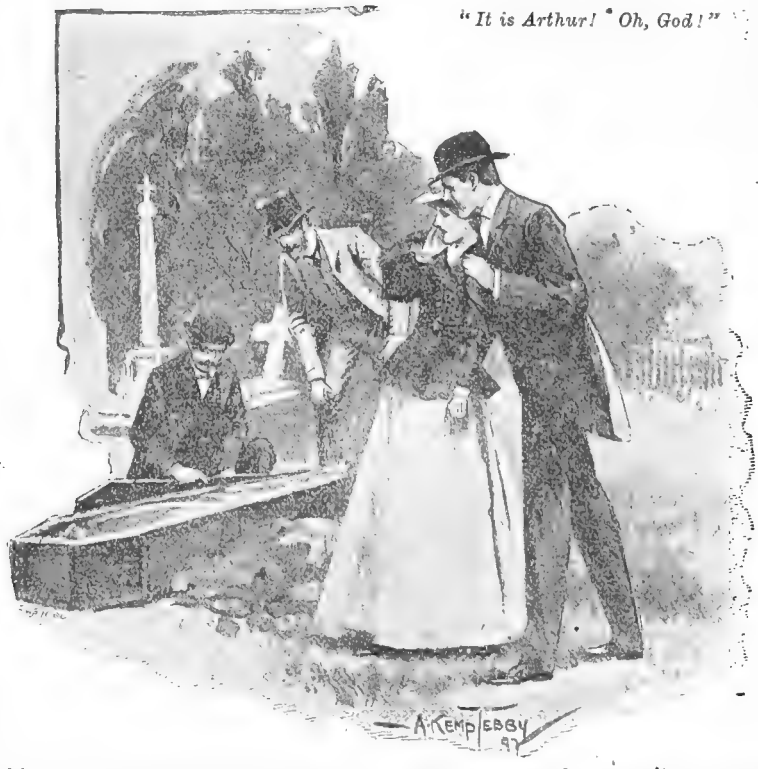
Tom nodded.

"You won't let him be killed, will you?"

Tom nodded.

"Promise me."

"Aye—A promise."



"It is Arthur! Oh, God!"

She kissed him on the forehead—on both cheeks—on the mouth.

The train whistled and moved. Tom rushed back to his place beside Arthur, crying. Cécile waved her hand—and sighed.

* * * * *

France was growing hot for Dr. Danton. The news of the body buried alive had gone through the country. The name of Danton, who had arranged to meet the buried man at No. 11, Rue Taitbout, and the name Lemaitre, who had signed the death certificate, was in everybody's mouth. Probably the only person who saw nothing of it was Edith, living alone in the grand château in the solitudes of Provence.

What was the connection between Danton and Lemaitre? everyone was asking, but no one knew. Meanwhile, it could not be difficult for the authorities to find Danton, though of Lemaitre they could obtain no trace. Danton's properties—his house in the Rue de Rome, and his château in Provence—had recently been purchased. Within two days after the exhumation of Arthur, the police had gathered this information from the estate agents of Paris.

But long before two days Lemaitre had decided upon his course. As soon as he read of the salvation of Arthur he determined upon a swift and bold plan. He must destroy his identity as though he had never existed; then he would settle down in some secure nook of the world, and spend the rest of his existence in peace with Edith, his soul, his life. He at once telegraphed a warning to Hawke at the Rue de Rome; and before the police had had time to visit the house Hawke was well out of it, by no means very anxious about the matter. His pockets were kept well lined by Lemaitre, and in a state of maudlin content, just taking a few necessary precautions to keep himself unsuspected, he entered upon a career replete with his favourite enjoyments of gambling and drinking.

With masterly activity, Lemaitre, having dispatched the telegram to Hawke, hurried back to his château, for immediately on reaching it with Edith, he had kept his promise to her, and gone away. By his mysterious power over her will, he was enabled to persuade her that there were reasons why the château would not, after all, be a fit residence for her. Edith heard him with surprise, mistrust, and scorn, but with gradually lessening resistance.

After each of her encounters with him, when he had left her, she was filled with marvel at herself for yielding to his will; but the mysterious laws of Nature are stronger

than we. Always at the next contest with Lemaitre, the result was the same as at the last: she yielded.

That morning he had seen the offer of a lonely furnished house near the Lake of Como advertised for sale in an Avignon paper, and he had promptly purchased it under an assumed name. In the end, he induced Edith to travel thither alone that very day, and take up her abode in this Italian *casa*, with the promise that she would remain there in perfect seclusion till she heard from him. He sent with her three of the château servants, whom he trusted. He provided one of them with a roll of notes, and saw the party off by train. The same night, having elaborately disguised himself, he boldly started for Paris.

By the next evening, he had gathered into his pockets all the money he was worth from the Paris banks, in which it had been deposited in the assumed name of Corot.

At seven o'clock he was walking rapidly through the streets towards the Gare du Nord, a travelling-bag in his hand, when Cécile Delisle, who was walking in the same direction, but more slowly, saw him from behind beneath a lamp.

"My God! there is Lemaitre!" she muttered under her breath. "Why, he has the very back of Dr. Danton!"

Lemaitre had on a long mauve-coloured overcoat, which reached to his feet. It was furred at the neck, and wrapped him high up round the head. The weather was quite mild, but he had chosen it for the double purpose of concealment and warmth in his long journey. He had not once worn it since an eventful day, months ago, and he had not brushed it on taking it from his trunk on the previous day.

"My God! there is Lemaitre——"

She had seen, beneath the lamp, three blood-red hairs—like the hairs of a rug—still adhering to the back of the light-coloured coat.

She ran to the other side, and on in front, to a point from which she could look back at his face, and at once, with sinking disappointment, cried:

"But *that* is not Lemaitre! *That* is not a pale man!"

Lemaitre had at present a high, florid complexion, red hair, and a long, pointed, red beard; he looked very like a Yankee traveller. A peaked cap of check cloth was drawn low down over his eyes.

"*Was* it Lemaitre?" Her mind swung backward in favour of the negative. Might not *two* men, by some possibility, have red hairs on a mauve coat? And this man had the wrong face. She was distracted with doubt. And she felt that, if *she* were so, an officer of the police would be certain to smile at her simplicity if she attempted to give the man in charge.

But she would not lose sight of him. Just then she had been going to the Gare de Lyons, intending to travel south, with the object of spying out Danton's château near Avignon. She had an instinct that Edith might be found there. But now she changed her mind, and walking abreast of Lemaitre on the opposite side of the street, she kept up with him till he reached the other station. She heard him take his ticket. When he stepped into the Calais train, she, too, got into it, immediately behind him.

She slept towards morning in the Hotel Continental at Calais, where Lemaitre, too, had put up.

She awoke frightened, about eleven a.m. She had overslept herself. What if he had gone? She made inquiries in the hotel, and heard that the gentleman with the red beard had gone out, but would return. She looked through the recent arrivals in the visitors' book, but saw no name that she knew. If this were, indeed, Lemaitre, he was in disguise, and had used a false name. She hurriedly ate something, and went out into the streets.

Moored to the end of the pier was a Marseilles schooner with her mainsail up and flapping in the breeze. There was quite a swarm of men about and on her, busily loading her with firkins of paraffin-oil in cubic tin boxes. She was to leave that evening, and had already taken out a clearance for Toulon.

In the cabin, at the time when Cécile came out to spy after him, Lemaitre was closeted with the skipper of the schooner, a thick-set tar, with short beard, and broad face Their conference lasted two hours.

The schooner was heavily insured for the voyage; and it was arranged between them, that on Lemaitre handing the captain 15,000 francs for his own personal benefit, the captain and mate should land him in a boat in the middle of the second night out, on a lonely spot of the western coast of France. The schooner should then proceed some distance on her way, and be hurriedly scuttled towards morning. When the crew were already in the boats, and the schooner was on the very point of sinking, the captain and mate, who alone were to be in the secret, should raise the alarm that the passenger had been forgotten in his berth; and they should pretend to make some effort to save him just as the schooner disappeared from sight. The other sailors would thus be made certain that the passenger had perished.

Shortly before leaving the Hotel Continental, Lemaitre intended altering the false name he had put in the visitors' book to his true name; and as all France was talking of that name, the police would quickly know that he had been there, the sailors on board the steamer also would know him by his true name; and two days after the world would be convinced that Lemaitre had perished at sea. He would then boldly resume his life, without disguise, as Dr. Danton. The police knew the appearance of Dr. Danton, and would doubtless find and bother him. But that would be, at worst, a mere temporary inconvenience. Against Danton they had not even a charge to bring, much less evidence to prove it. For Arthur had been so stupefied by the slight prick of Danton's ring, which was too slight for him even

"Was *it Lemaitre?*"

to feel or know of, that he was utterly unaware of the drops which had been afterwards administered to him; so that he could not at all account, when questioned, for the strange state of death-in-life into which he had fallen. When asked if any drug had been given him, he had, in fact, said no.

It was Lemaitre who had signed the death certificate; it was Lemaitre who had murdered Julie; it was Lemaitre

whose existence and identity must be wiped clean out of the book of life; but Danton was safe.

But when Lemaitre was stepping from the schooner back to the pier, all being arranged between him and the skipper, Cécile saw him from a distance. And half-an-hour later she was beseeching the captain to grant her a passage to Toulon in his ship.

He told her that it was impossible. His craft was not a passenger-boat; and he had already departed from his custom by taking one passenger.

"A gentleman?"

"Yes."

"I wish I could see him—he might yield his place to me. What name?"

"Dr. Lemaitre."

Cécile tingled.

"So you cannot let me go with you?"

She looked through the hole.

"Well, haven't I told you at least twenty times, mademoiselle, it is quite out of the question?"

"I will go with you all the same," said Cécile to herself.

For two hours longer she watched Lemaitre about Calais, keeping her face well out of view. He had no idea that she was near him. And in her effort to escape his notice, it happened, too, that she never really saw his features well. About three p.m. she observed him write something in the visitors' book, and soon afterwards, looking, saw the words: "Armand Lemaitre."

She no longer doubted that he was the Lemaitre she sought, and decided that his florid colour was a disguise. She could then and there have given him into custody with tolerable certainty; but the mystery of this bold announcement of his name was too much for her egotism, her scent for the hidden; this man was *hers*; for many months all her thoughts had been centred around him; she herself must probe him to the bottom, and shew herself his master.

"And now," she said, "for the schooner!"

She mounted watch from the quay, near the bustling and swarming craft, and watched till she saw the captain step ashore and walk away landward. She had in her hand a small bag, crammed with sandwiches and a bottle of water.

About seven, the schooner dropped from her moorings and sailed leisurely out, deep-laden. Lemaitre occupied a stuffy little cabin on the starboard side. Immediately for'ard of it was the pantry; and immediately connected with this, separated from it by a sliding board, a tiny compartment, totally dark, from the ceiling of which hung three hams. On the floor of this cell, her back propped against the partition, sat Cécile, chewing sandwiches.

In two hours, the schooner was plunging and swaggering about among the waters. The night came on bleak and squally, and up rose the north wind stormily, rolling large billows before it.

At about eleven Cécile staggered from her hiding-place, drew the panel, entered the pantry, and came out into the passage of the cabin. All was still, save the piping winds, the slow dirge of the creaking ropes, and the click of a lantern wildly swinging from the roof. On first coming down into the cabin, she had looked into all the berths, and decided which was the best; that one, she knew, would be allotted to Lemaitre.

There was no key in the door, and steadying herself with both hands, she looked through the hole. A lantern nailed to a beam gave light within. Lemaitre was sitting on the edge of his bed, fully dressed, with something held up in his hand, at which he steadily gazed. Was he sea-sick? she wondered. He hardly seemed the same man whose face she had seen that day. Beneath the red with which his face was painted, the greenish hue of horror was now suggested. The hand which held the something before his eyes trembled like a reed in the wind.

She stood clinging desperately to the posts, looking at him for about half-an-hour, and keeping at the same time a sharp ear for any approaching step. Lemaitre, but for his trembling hand, seemed turned to stone. Suddenly he dashed the thing he held on to a chair, with a jerk of terror and abhorrence. It was then that Cécile saw that it was a photograph of Julie. She had seen the likeness which Edith had had of her mother, and recognised it under the lantern-light. Lemaitre suddenly picked it up again and put it hurriedly into an inner pocket of his overcoat, which he still wore. Cécile crept back to her retreat, frightened by the look she had seen in those haunted eyes.

When the day broke a definite storm was blowing from the north-west, and the schooner, labouring heavily, was drenching the man at the wheel with seas shipped over her bows. Through the day the wind continued to roar, loading the reefed sails with tempest. At five o'clock it was as dark as midnight, and the schooner was butting blindly and sullenly along in a cloud of spray, under half her jib and mainsail. Her foresail, an hour before, had been battered into shreds by the cuffs of the blast.

At seven the captain was down below in Lemaitre's berth having a long conference with him. Cécile, ever on the watch from the dark door of the pantry, saw him enter, and crept near. She heard from their talk, the whole scheme, by which Lemaitre was to be landed and the ship scuttled. The captain had come to tell him that on such a night as this the thing was out of the question. A boat put out in such a sea would almost certainly founder.

Lemaitre walked up and down the little berth, mad at the delay.

Cécile's quick wit took in the entire plan. Lemaitre intended to wipe out his whole former existence from the world of men. This, then, was the secret of the signature of his true name in the hotel book. When the captain rose to leave him, Cécile plunged back to her pantry.

It could hardly have been ten minutes later when the cry of "Fire! Fire!" was raised far for'ard.

"Fire! Fire!"

The ship was loaded with oil, and the winds were howling like ten thousand bulls in pain.

(To be concluded.)

RESULT OF JUMBLED PICTURE COMPETITION.

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A copy of "Valdar the Oft-Born" has been forwarded to each of the following five:

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Herewith you have the next ten pictures. Write down the names in the spaces provided, and keep your list until two other sets have appeared. **DON'T SEND THEM IN UNTIL TUESDAY, APRIL 27,** *next.*

You may forward as many attempts as you like, but each set of five must be in a separate envelope, and will be considered separate attempts.

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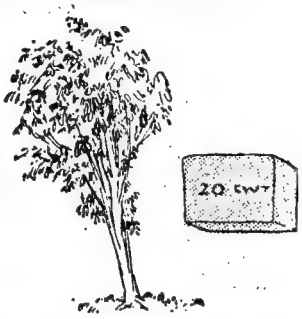

No. 24.....

No. 25.....

No. 26.....

No. 27.....

No. 28.....

Remember these Things.

YOUNG PEOPLE should compete and get their elders to help them.

If there is any picture you cannot name some friend may be able to give you the information.

You need only give the surnames of the people, except in cases where the christian names are depicted.

Name.....

Address.....

No. 29.....

No. 30.....

There are plenty of sources from which you can obtain a list of the names of M.P.'s.—Whitaker's Almanack, the London Post-Office Directory, Hazell's Annual, and publications of that sort. They will help you to win.

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Easter Eggs.

I was twenty years old and inspector of the study-hall at the College of Chautevigne, a little old town whose lime-whitened houses were basking in the sun on the banks of the Rhone.

Above the houses, and surmounted by a weather-cock or a cross, pointed the steeples of its innumerable churches, while the whole was inclosed with sham fortifications, cut out as if from pieces of lace, and gilded like the crust of a *pâté*.

By what train of circumstances I had come to occupy this not very lucrative and little-to-be-envied situation, permit me to say nothing. The story, besides, would not be new. There comes a time to many of us when, if the heart is rich and the brain full, the pocket is light and the purse empty.

The College was, as are almost all these little colleges of the South, an old religious building, more or less appropriate for its novel use. The passages were dark and winding; the class-rooms had still the air of the cell; in the refectory was still the chair where formerly each of the white fathers came in his turn to read some pious work, while the others, in silence, ate their stew of potatoes or their bowl of rice and milk. Even now the table fare was but little changed. In the court, surrounded by its circular yard, surmounted by high-standing walls covered with moss, the sun seemed never willing to enter.

Ah, well! You may believe me or not, as you wish, but this college without sunshine, with its old walls and its gloomy passages, had ended by pleasing me, and I lived there contentedly; I ceased to remember the principal, a very slim man with a spare beard, whose blue glasses and enormous bunch of keys seemed at every instant to spring up behind you; I even forgot my scholars, a lot of *gamins* badly combed, mischievous, and wicked—and all this because, one morning, from the window of my room, I made a discovery.

It was Thursday. I was awaiting the hour to descend to the study-hall, and was leaning on my elbow at the window, gazing at the roofs and chimneys. I saw in the distance the fields already green, and on my right the Rhone, on the blue waves of which, hoisting their white sails, the little barques were passing. Below, in the street, a scissor-grinder sang as he made the wheel of his grindstone whizz; and in the material silence of being and things, his song came up to me, mixed with the rumbling of the stone under the iron.

Suddenly a window was opened almost opposite me, a hand pushed back the narrow shutter, which creaked on its hinges; then a head appeared, a pretty blonde head, with large blue eyes and hair disordered in a most amusing fashion. She had not seen me. Gently she hung a little mirror on the side of the window; then, taking her long golden hair in her hands, she set about completing her toilet. I stood there open-mouthed, my heart beating loudly. But at the same time I listened to the neighbouring clock. If I could, I would have stopped the hands. Alas! It rang the hour! Below the drummer beat his drum, and its roll mounting, spread the length of the long corridors of the old college. It was the porter, whose business it was to beat the morning call, and he acquitted himself very conscientiously, I assure you.

At the noise my neighbour lifted her head. She saw me. I began to redden, for her look, at first angry, softened, and while I withdrew with regret from the window, it seemed to me that a peal of mocking laughter accompanied my departure.

I arrived at the study-hall late. The principal said nothing, but the bunch of keys shook in the most significant manner.

At noon I knew who my charming unknown was! Ah! the lady was neither a duchess nor a marchioness, but love never has had its titles of nobility. She was called Mariette, and she simply was the niece of the pastry-cook established almost in front of our college, and who recruited his best clients among all our young students.

I never, until that day, had paid any attention to his marble shelves, whereon gridirons placed on painted plates, spread in a most appetising way, were golden nugatines, buns loaded with raisins, and cream puffs on which the sugar glistened.

I had never entered his shop, but now I desired two things—to cross the threshold and to win, at any price, the friendship of the uncle. It seemed to me that that was the chief point, and I commenced the attack that same day.

At two o'clock, when I went out with my pupils, I made them pass very near the shop. I ought to say that in this I had not much trouble, as they went very willingly indeed. The uncle was there, large and fat, in his white vest with its double row of buttons. Timidly, I saluted him. Surprised, he glanced at me; then mechanically bowed. Good man! how gladly I would have hugged him!

That same evening, towards six o'clock, I entered his house. The shop of the pastry-cook was open to everyone. In a trembling voice I asked, from the threshold of the door, for four sous' worth of gum drops! And I coughed to give a most serious aspect to my demand.

It was *she* who came to serve me; ravishingly pretty, blonder even than I had thought, and very sweet with her white apron so tidy, and giving out a warm perfume of fresh cakes. She smiled sweetly, handing me the little paper bag, and I gave her my four sous.

"Thank you, monsieur," said she, bowing slightly.

"Thank you, mademoiselle," said I, my voice trembling.

And I went out, not without once more saluting the uncle, who was reading his paper at the end of the shop.

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I have filled myself with gum drops all this month, and I have accomplished nothing. To write I have not dared; nor have I ventured to speak.

The uncle, it is true, bids me good-day now—Mariette salutes me also. But I am afraid of everyone, of myself, of the porter, of the neighbours, of the principal, of my two colleagues especially, two old mocking bachelors who, at times, look at me with a provoking air. And it was thus I found myself at Easter Sunday. I had before me five long days of vacation, five days of liberty.

"Are you a man?" I asked myself.

"Yes."

"Well, then, go ahead."

* * * * *

I awoke in the morning very full of life, songs on my lips and my heart full of laughter. I opened wide my window. Ah! but it is good to live! This was a great feast everywhere. The birds were warbling above my head, under the eaves. On all sides the bells were ringing, and their joyous chime seemed to answer one another. Then they began to chant all together, the big ones, with deep, loud basses, accompanying the clear voices of the smallest. And these sounds all seemed to ascend and then disperse high up in the rosy sky, and already all is bathed in sunshine.

A sharp knock at my door made me turn quickly. I opened it, and saw standing there the porter, a small, round, fat, old man, who smilingly handed me a package folded in white paper. "For you, Monsieur Jacques," said he. And he was gone.

Astonished, trembling, without knowing why, I untied the pink ribbon which fastened the parcel; I unfolded the paper and a little box appeared. I opened the box at once, and on a bed of cotton, white as snow, I saw—what? An Easter egg. A little Easter egg of sugar, on which, in red letters, was traced this magic word, "Hope!"

I remained a moment confused, gazing down by turns at the ribbon shining on the floor, the box, and the egg. Nothing indicated, nothing could indicate to me from whence came this gracious gift. I knew no one at Chautevigne. All at once I uttered a cry. I had divined the mystery. "It is from her," I said, and taking the egg in both my hands, I covered it with kisses, kisses which left on my lips a delicious perfume of violets. For I had now recognised the egg. All the week I had seen it in the shop window of the little shop.

It was she. She had guessed my secret. She had divined my timidity and my silence, and she had sent me this little Easter present that it might speak to me of her. Hope and confidence. My imagination travelled so much and so far that only an hour after I went down dressed in my best clothes. What I would do I had not decided, but I would do something.

It must be said my coat shone a little in the sun, the nap of my hat was a little thin in places, but I did not give much thought to these details. It was Easter. It made the sun clear. The bells were ringing like the joyous chimes of betrothal. And in the pocket of my coat, delicately resting in its bed of cotton, I could feel the egg of sugar, which I had been too willing to carry with me.

In passing before the porter's lodge I saw my two colleagues. I waved my hand to them; they bowed and smiled, and I went on. I was on the point of telling everyone of my good luck, even to the principal, if I had met him.

The pastry-cook, the uncle, was at his door. He saw me and signed me to approach. I pretended not to have seen, but he called me. I saw I commenced to be nervous. I was too lucky, and my happiness frightened me. I had always had a timid nature. I went towards him.

"And where were you going so fast?" said the large man, extending his hand, "and so fine!" added he, beginning to laugh.

I reddened, and did not know what to reply, but with a look I searched the interior of the shop. "If I could only let Mariette know that I am here!" thought I.

All at once an idea came to me. My old trick! I coughed.

"Still that villainous cold there?" asked the uncle.

"Yes," replied I. "By-the-way," I added, "since I am here I may as well take some gum drops."

"Very good," said he; "come in."

And I entered. Mariette was not there!

The uncle took down the jar, and one by one rolled the gum drops in the scales, separating any that were fastened together. I looked about me, my eyes everywhere, hoping that the curtain at the end would be lifted, and in her pretty white apron, Mariette would appear, smiling, a finger on her lips; and I quietly prepared to take the egg from my pocket, that she might see that I had received it and that I understood.

"*A propos* of this," said the pastry-cook, rolling the paper bag between his fat fingers, "has the farce succeeded?"

I looked at him in astonishment, not understanding.

"Ah, but you are not, perhaps, in the game," said he. "Your colleagues told us the story last evening. They came to buy an Easter egg, which they wished to send to a silly friend of theirs, to make him think that the present came from a beautiful unknown, for whom he had been sighing for two months."

It seemed that everything was turning round me.

"They wanted one," he continued, "with a suitable motto. Mariette found an old one of last year for them However, they will tell you the story better than I, but this much I can say: they laughed very heartily as they tied their little package with a beautiful pink ribbon. *A propos*, I had forgotten to tell you the principal thing, and, to a customer like you, that would be impolite! My niece will no longer serve you with gum drops. She is to be married in eight days. Her future family has come to visit her this morning, and this evening a grand betrothal dinner will be given. Ah, it will be a great affair!"

And, bursting with laughter and pleasure, he slapped me on the shoulder. The shock was too rude—I fell back limply on a chair, unable to say a word. Under me I heard a crash. It was the egg which broke. I had sat upon it. Fortunately, a customer entered, and I went out immediately.

"You have forgotten your gum drops," called the pastrycook.

"Thank you," said I, and taking the little bag I rushed away. I wished to be at home—alone with myself.

In passing the porter's lodge I saw my colleagues still there. I passed bravely by them, and went up the stairs singing. But once in my room, I sadly removed my coat, and plunged my hand in my pocket to see what remained of my poor Easter egg. It was in crumbs.

Easter fell this year on the first of April—I had forgotten. It was in looking at the calendar that there came back to me the remembrance of this little story.

Fernaud Beissier.

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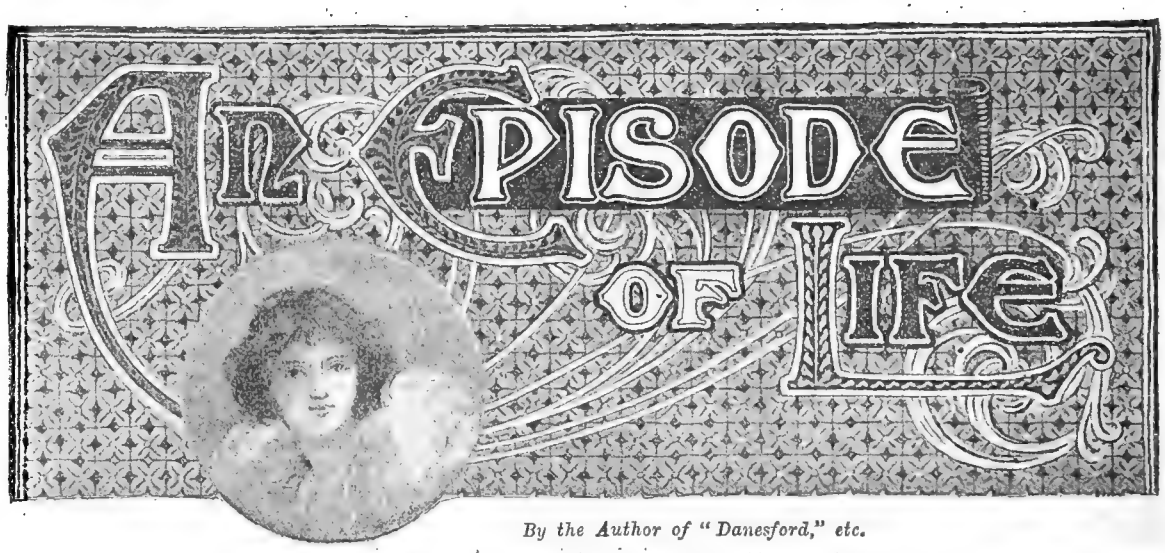
An Episode of Life



By the Author of "Danesford," etc.

CHAPTER VI.

Diplomacy at Fault.

Sir Richard Arbuthnot stepped briskly along the front at Brighton towards Hove. The wind coming from the sea dashed the waves with sounding force against the wall, and flung the spray high overhead. Here and there frothy patches blew across the asphalt, and stones and weed lay scattered by the railings. The tide was high, and as the white-crested waves rolled to the beach and broke in tumult, small groups of sightseers, daring a cold douche, ran briskly forward to the railings and back, followed by the flying scud. Not always with impunity, for now and again the ringing laughter of children would tell that one of their number had been caught, and he, a hero for the moment amongst his playfellows, ran back to safety, wet but happy.

The sun shone brightly, and tempted many to brave the biting wind, so that Sir Richard found his way barred many a time by groups of people retreating from some heavy rush of bubbling water. But he did not linger; he was there on an errand not to his liking. His thoughts were elsewhere.

(1.)

But for an exclamation of impatience as some hurrying child cannoned against his legs, he paid no attention to the scene around.

At length he turned to the King's Road, and drawing an envelope from his pocket read an address. "Alpha Villas," he muttered; "an ominous name. The beginning of the alphabet; I wish we could skip all the other letters and reach the end. There will be a row, I know. What could possess that silly boy to run his head into the noose a second time passes my comprehension. I freed him from the entanglement once—got no thanks by-the-way—and now—— Why will men make such fools of themselves about women? Ah! well, Dick, my boy, strictly between ourselves, you need not say too much. But this must be the house. No. 17, yes, I know the type, tawdry, dingy neighbours either side, a bright clean villa, with an air, in between. I wonder if the lady will see me?"

Of the maid who answered the bell, he asked if Mrs. Dennison were at home, handed her a card and waited in the porch.

Presently the maid returned with a message that her mistress was indisposed and could not see the gentleman.

"Now, look here," said Sir Richard to the girl, "I must see your mistress. You tell her I have come from London on purpose, and I am not going back again until I have seen her. I will send out for sandwiches and some beer and sit on the doorstep until she is ready. Now, tell her that."

After a few minutes Sir Richard was requested to enter, and turning into a tiny drawing-room, which opened into a smaller conservatory, found himself face to face with Nelly.

Standing in the centre of the room, drawn to her full height, with flashing eyes and head thrown back, she angrily demanded, as soon as he entered:

"How dare you come into my house in this way, Sir Richard Arbuthnot?"

"Mrs. Dennison?" he queried with a smile and bow.

"You know I am Mrs. Dennison," she answered with heightened colour, "but my question?"

"Not so fast, my dear young lady. I want to have some conversation with you. But with your permission I will take a chair."

"You will evidently do as you please."

"That I confess has been my aim in life. But will you not be seated also? I may keep you some little time."

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"You assume that I will allow you to remain?"

"I think you will not turn me out to eat sandwiches on your doorstep. Now, please sit down. That is better; now we may talk more at ease."

"I have no wish to talk at all. I am waiting to hear why you have intruded here. You must know I hate you, and with good reason."

"Hate, eh," said Sir Richard with affected surprise, "why, what have I done?"

"Did you not take Roy away from me months ago? Do you not come here to do so again?"

"Now, my dear lady——"

"Do not speak to me like that. It is an impertinence," she broke in hotly.

"I beg your pardon, but you are very charming, and the phrase came naturally. Now, don't interrupt again. We shall never get on at this rate. It is about Roy I have come to speak. I need not go into the past, I am a man of the world, and was young once, and now that I have the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Dennison I can appreciate his temptation, I can——"

She sprang to her feet in anger.

"You madden me, you insult me with a compliment. For Heaven's sake say what you have to say and go. Am I to ring the bell and have you shown to the door?"

But he only smiled amusedly, as he resumed.

"Pray sit down again. You excite yourself into quite unnecessary anger. I meant no insult, I meant what I said, and had no second thought. You are a handsome woman in anger; you can, I am sure, be charming in every mood. Now, my de——, there, I forgot for the moment I must not say that. I am not here to make you angry, I am here as Roy's father. What was is past, the present is my concern. Of course, he does not know I have called upon you. Roy is married, as you know. His wife would not stand this—affair, shall I call it? Few wives would; I appeal to you to put a stop to it. It can only end in disaster for him and her. I know, of course, that my daughter came to your rooms when Roy was there. He has made his peace. She believes this ended. Misery, ruin, regret, stare him in the face if she discover that he has lied. It is not too late, but it will be so soon."

"And I? You do not consider me."

"We do not expect you to starve. We will be most happy to make arrangements."

"Stop, stop, Sir Richard; you speak of we for the first time. Are you here with Roy's sanction? Mind, I ask the truth, and will verify your reply, for frankly I do not trust you."

"Now that is not fair," he said, but not in an offended tone. In truth, he admired what he mistook for a business-like grasp of the situation. But he was not prepared to lie. "No," he proceeded, "I have already said Roy does not know I am here."

"Thank Heaven!" she exclaimed.

Then he saw his mistake. Still, he could not believe that money would not smooth away difficulties. He must be circumspect, but anticipated success.

(2.)

"Of course," he proceeded, "I do not intend that you should suffer pecuniarily. That I trust you will permit me to make my business. I will instruct my lawyers to——"

She buried her face in her hands and moaned:

"Lawyers! How cold, how pitiless you are! I love him, I tell you—love him with a love of which you know nothing, and you talk of lawyers! Oh, I shall go mad! In pity go. If you wanted revenge, if you wanted to wound me, be content; you have crushed me. Oh, go, go!"

"Revenge — wound! Not I. No such thought entered my head. I hoped we were upon a business footing. I offer you a bargain. No, do not wince; you do not like the word. It is an ugly one, perhaps, but sentiment has long been dead with me. As men grow older, sentiment, gush, love—er—of this sort, lose their grip before the real force of common-sense. The intangible gives place to the tangible. Roy cannot, would not, put it so. He is infatuated, reckless. Yes, I feared that would please you; but I, his father, see but ruin ahead, absolute social ruin and misery for him and her. Again I appeal to you. My daughter-in-law is a good, pure woman. Think of her. It is not too late; she knows nothing of this. She believes Roy to be true; now she has forgiven, she loves him."

She sprang to her feet and faced him with flashing eyes. That last phrase had undone the effect of his appeal.

"She has no right to love him—he is mine, mine, I say. She bought him. He married her to save you. Oh, I know! You were on the verge of bankruptcy. He had no choice. You forced on the marriage. He loves me—I hate her!"

She paced up and down the small room with brows knitted and hands clenched. She had no thought for the

(3.)

man who sat before her, silenced by her passionate outburst. She saw but Roy as she had seen him last, confident, happy, the old smile upon his face, the smile she knew so well and which, as a fact, had long been absent.

They had cast in their lot together; come what might, they had sworn eternal love. She paused before the window, and unconsciously followed the whirling movements of a few crisp, dry leaves which, torn by the gale from a stunted oak, rustled across the pavement.

The lines across her face smoothed out, a smile puckered the corners of her eyes, she no longer stooped as but a few moments ago. She looked into a dingy street, true, but the mental vision soared far and away above the driving clouds into bright sunshine.

Sir Richard's clear, cold voice startled her as he said: "Well, Mrs. Dennison, what is your answer? You do not refuse my offer, I hope. Now, do not be hasty," as he noted her quick turn and the light in her eyes, "I will come later, if you wish. Take time to think it over. Yes, that will be best, think it over. Upon your decision the happiness of many depends."

Never before had Dick Arbuthnot felt so uncomfortable, never had he felt so small. Many a time in the past had his good offices been in request on behalf of friends who wished to make other arrangements; then he had carried matters with a high hand, had offered terms and seen them accepted, but now before she spoke he knew he had failed.

For once his confidence failed him, and though he attempted an easy mien it was but a sorry effort.

"No need to wait, to think it over. You have my answer now. Until Roy asks me to free him I will not. You are utterly selfish; your pleading, up to a point, moved me. Then you offered gold, gold which must come from her; you have none, you have been a beggar for years past. It is your turn to wince now. Hear me out; this is my scene." And as anger mastered her control, she stood before him with hand outstretched pointed to him. "She whom I hate and detest may never know, but the money you offer would come from her purse. You—yes, you, immaculate you—would manage that. You would buy me with her money, and Roy does not know. You think yourself a good diplomatist; I tell you, you are puny, despicable! Go your way; I refuse to listen to you. Go!" and she rang the bell violently. "The door, Frances," as the maid appeared hurriedly.

"One minute, please." Then, turning to the maid, he said, in tones she obeyed mechanically: "Step outside that door and close it." Then he proceeded. "Now, Mrs. Dennison, you have refused my offer, to my great regret. I will not reopen that subject for the present, but I appeal to you to be discreet. You know Roy is at the Métropôle; perhaps you do not know his wife is there also. I beg of you, let there be no scandal. You said in anger just now you hated her. In calmer moments you would not, I am sure, say that; you would not wish to. But there, you understand me. May I hope you will do me this favour?"

As Sir Richard, crestfallen, returned to the Métropôle, battling with the wind, which was rising to the force of a gale, he irritably reviled this woman who had defied him, and all concerned, except himself. His well-meant effort had been a failure; but as his natural buoyancy returned, he did not dream of attributing want of success to his inability.

CHAPTER VII.

Saved in Error.

Roy Arbuthnot, in the meantime, had gone for a ride, and alone. From the front he had turned to the north, past the gas works at Hove, and then some distance on.

(4.)

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leaving the road, he had followed the path across the fields to a solitary farmhouse, which nestled amongst trees at the foot of a steep hill, upon the summit of which a tiny church reared its square tower, sombre and grey. A solitary building, mean and unpretentious in design, where, at most, some twenty or thirty worshippers regularly assembled each week, as their forefathers had done, and were content with the simple ritual, untroubled with doubts and modern innovations, under the guidance of the Vicar, who had led their devotions for a generation.

Here the wind moaned high overhead, bending the topmost boughs of the taller trees, whistling round the old grey tower, but leaving in peace the quiet valley where he paused.

Over the farm buildings the few remaining leaves of a luxuriantly-climbing creeper glowed a deep russet red, some grand old oaks, which had not yet shed their leaves, rustled and quivered in querulous age. The hedgerows still were green, and here and there a bright mass of red berries stood out in bold relief before a background of deep green holly. The ducks and geese in the pond by the gates made much of the warm sunshine, pluming themselves with noisy splashing of wings in the dark water, and chattering incessantly in language they doubtless understood.

On another occasion, in a different mood, he would have appreciated the quiet beauty of the scene, the restfulness of the surroundings, but to-day he longed for action. Impatiently he pressed his horse against the hill opposite, and galloped along the ride which crosses the golf-links at a speed which the animal he rode did not appreciate.

On the high land the wind spent its full force, screaming through the gorse, and bending before it the yielding bracken-like waves of an oily sea. He drew bridle only at the Dyke, to admire, perhaps, the finest view of Southern England. On this sharp wintry day no tourists were about to offend ears and eyes by inane shoutings and boisterous horse-play.

At his feet, deep in the valley, lay a peaceful hamlet, dreaming its life, a life of dull routine, to which excitement and bustle were but names, but which had compensations in absence of these very points. And beyond, far as the eyes could reach, like a well-drawn map, stretched field upon field, homestead after homestead, the hedges standing out darkly across the green, which alternately paled and deepened as scudding clouds crossed the sun—a network framed by man on Nature's foundation, the parts of a puzzle fitting closely with no patch left blank; and in the blue distance range upon range of hills, until an indistinct blur marked the limit of human vision.

But he could not enjoy the panorama of beauty spread before him. He was troubled with the spirit of unrest. The wind howled around the desolate inn, and flapped the cords against the flagstaff with short, sharp cracks which irritated. The surroundings were in contrast. Here, on the summit of the hill, were rush and roar; below, in the valley, peace and quietude. He would face the gale, and turning, again cantered over the springy turf of the downs right in its teeth.

And now the blood tingled in his veins, his spirits rose as the fierce gusts beat upon him, and he pressed his knees against the willing sides of the game chestnut which caught something of his master's mood, and with distended nostril, forced his way onward at reckless speed.

At length, soothed, perhaps tired with battle, he slackened speed, and turning homewards, jogged quietly to the hotel. There he learned that Mary and his father had gone upon the pier to watch the breakers roll to the shore.

Nelly, when Sir Richard had left, had indulged in a fit of crying. She had flung herself upon a couch and sobbed hysterically. It was all too cruel. No one had any thought for her. Sinclair, *his* father, each thought only of Roy and his wife. She was not even considered. She was a pawn in this game of chess, of little or no account. She was utterly, unspeakably miserable.

(5.)

Why follow her mood through? There is no need. The inevitable reaction followed. The reaction which prevents more suicides than does qualm of conscience or scruple. Gradually she braced herself to fight, to see it through. Roy's wife was at Brighton—she would see her again and judge of the chances of the coming struggle.

She washed away the traces of tears, and dressing with perhaps more than usual care, set out for a walk. Battling with the boisterous wind, which whirled her skirts closely round, fighting for foothold as each strong gust threatened to carry her off her feet, she pressed on. Her combative instincts had been braced this morning, and now she relished this struggle with the elements which at any rate fought fair. She laughed joyously at each fresh challenge of strength, and at repeated victories.

After all, this noisy but humourous antagonist could do no more than reveal a shapely ankle for a few seconds, and a dexterous twirl of drapery robbed him and others of that pleasure. The colour mounted to her cheeks, she was, and she knew it, as dainty a specimen of English womanhood as Brighton contained. Hers was not the mind to brood long over worries; hers was an elastic temperament which rebounded easily. The interview with Sir Richard had crushed her for the time being, but knowing herself, she had prescribed this cure, and found it efficacious. She had even for the moment forgotten the object of this hard tussle; she was a beautiful animal warring amiably against a rough yet chivalrous enemy, and she enjoyed it.

Before she realised where she had got to, she was opposite the Métropôle. With a start, she stopped, for on the steps she saw Sir Richard Arbuthnot, holding his hat on with one hand, whilst with the other, he pointed to the pier, and apparently was asking a lady by his side to go there.

This must be Roy's wife. Yes, she saw it was, and Nelly turned, and followed them at a distance. She noted that Mary, for her style, was a handsome woman. She reluctantly admitted that. She was a formidable rival, she had allowed that already.

Anger, jealousy, returned. With frowning brows and pale cheeks, she followed them along the pier. If only this woman were out of the way, if only she were dead, Roy would, she knew, marry her, despite all. The thought was maddening. She was a murderess in thought, utterly reckless. Mary dead! Impossible. There, in front, she stepped with the free, easy swing of perfect health. The sea beneath rolled with majestic sweep in white-crested billows to the shore, to burst in roar and tumult upon the shingle.

She felt she could laugh to see Mary caught on the crest of a huge wave, and dashed lifeless on the stones, with froth and weed for a shroud. She shuddered; it was too horrible, but it was real. She was not herself yet as she followed them along the pier; the hideous thought would come: if only it could be! If only some accident would clear her path.

And Roy was but a few yards away, though he did not see her.

In front of her Sir Richard and Mary, bending low to meet the wind, were passing to the head of the pier, where a small knot of people stood watching the waves hiss and foam through the iron grating of the lower landing steps. The rail on the leeward side had been removed for the purpose of carrying out some repairs then in progress.

As Mary fearlessly stood by the edge of the pier, Nelly reached her side. Without warning a heavy squall struck the pier.

Through the air there flew a human form to fall upon the crest of a broken wave, whilst above the roar, a voice shrieked: "Roy, Roy!"

"Heavens, Nelly!" shouted Roy to the gale, and throwing off coat and vest, plunged into the sea. His was a hard fight. Time and again he almost gave up the struggle. His strength failed, the blinding spray filled his eyes. His breath came in short, painful gasps. Rolled over in the surf, buffeted by the pitiless waves, he, yet with his burden, was driven shorewards. Once he thought he heard encouraging shouts, directions it might be. Then came—a blank.

A glimmer of reason returned as he lay upon the beach beyond the reach of the waves, with strong arms holding him. By his side lay motionless, a woman, and as he turned he saw Mary.

"Good heavens, my wife!"

Hours later as the tide receded, loungers by the beach saw another form twisting in the surging water, now close in, now drawn back with the suck of a retreating wave. And when at length it was recovered, there lay a beautiful woman with long, auburn hair, which clung around her face and in part concealed an ugly gash across a fair brow.

* * * * *

Again May had arrived, and Sir Richard Arbuthnot was in town for the season. He had met Sinclair in Bond Street, and he was now answering a string of questions.

"Roy? Yes, he's in the country and likely to remain there for the present. He was much cut up about that Brighton business. Sad, you say? Well, in a way, yes, but most opportune. She could not have chosen a more fitting time, nor, as it turned out, a more telling manner of quitting life. She pushed Mary into the sea. Nonsense? I tell you I saw her do it. You can't believe it? Ah, my boy, you, perhaps, have not seen her in a rage. I have.

"She once assumed, for my benefit, the tragedy queen business, and did it well, too. I have no doubt she overbalanced and the sudden squall helped. She must have struck a girder as she fell, and sank like a stone. I was on the beach and helped to pull Roy in. Of course, Mary thinks he went over to save her, and she worships Roy. She will never learn the truth. By-the-way, do you know there is a son and heir? All goes well, in fact. Roy's health? Well, might be better, perhaps. He broods a good deal, and worries; but he always was too sensitive. Give him time. You are in a hurry, I see. Well, good-bye! See you to-night, I suppose."

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THE VOW of KING VENDIS.

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IN the palmy days of old Atlantis, when her armies were invincible and her fleets swept the sea with uniform victory, and her colonies were prosperous and loyal, Prince Vendis came to the Golden Throne of his father Dulo, in the six-and-fortieth year of his age.

King Dulo the Seventh had been a ruler of kind heart and slow wit, too simple and trusting for a monarch of a restless people, and his reign had been a record of misfortunes and losses of legal privilege and dignity, second only to the record of Unlucky Atripan. But it has passed into a by-word that delicate children make old folks and fragile buildings are the last to be destroyed, and so it happened, that for all his lucklessness, King Dulo reigned long and undisputedly, leaving the throne to his only son when Vendis was a man past the prime of life, and over-worn with dissipation and Court living.

Many were the forebodings of the priests as to the future of Atlantis when the Prince put on the crown after his father was buried in the pyramid of Kronos; yet their fears proved baseless in the end. Power and responsibility brought sobriety and wisdom to Vendis, and he set himself to regain what his father had lost, to curb the usurpations of the nobles, to check the avarice of the priests, to make himself a king in deed as well as in name.

He succeeded well, and under his sway the people settled down, glad to feel a master-hand at the helm of the ship of state, and for ten years there was peace in Atlantis, and all her Court intrigues were set at rest.

But happiness is never the lot of mortals for long together, and trouble came to King Vendis towards the last.

Like his father, he had one child only—a son—and, like himself, Prince Sanim was grown past his youth before he saw the end of his father's reign. Now Sanim was a goodly-looking man, with brown curly locks and ruddy face, and a stalwart figure that women loved to see, and it was openly bruited about at the palace that the hands of the most high-born and beauteous maidens in the land were his for the asking. Bright eyes, and honeyed words, and tender glances, were ever ready for him at the banquets and state ceremonials, and they were many who envied his lot.

But though his father besought him often to make his choice from amongst these, particularly wishing him to marry the daughter of one Dernon, a rich noble governor of the Province of Aidè, Prince Sanim would have none of them, seeking instead amongst the women of the poorer classes for a wife.

So a coolness grew between the King and his son, and their lives drifted apart, Sanim dwelling chiefly in the old Palace of Miropis, the ancient capital, doing as his desires listed; and one day a messenger came to Vendis whilst he was seated in the Hall of Audience, and spoke secretly in his ear. A blackness as of the Shadows grew upon the King's face as he listened to the news, and the messenger trembled as he saw the Royal hand fly to the sword hilt.

"Art sure that this is a true tale, slave?" cried Vendis, with menace in his tone. "Wilt swear it by the Spirit of Truth; by the Eternal Three?"

"I swear it, King," said the terrified bearer of ill tidings, "by all and every spirit known to men! It is a true tale I have brought thee."

"Then tell it to my counsellors and people, slave," said Vendis, seizing his crown and dashing it to the carpet in front of the throne. "Tell it to them, so that all men may know how my son hath brought disgrace upon me and upon my father's house and upon the banner of Atlantis. Tell it them, I command thee."

The Nubian slave, knowing full well the stern nature of the King, stood forth and told his tale. And these were his words:

"I am sent here from Miropis, by the Priests of Truth that guard the Sacred Grotto, to tell unto the King the sad news that his only son, Prince Sanim, hath taken unto himself a wife without his knowledge, and, moreover, a woman who is of no good repute, the daughter of a pirate captain, whose ship has sorely ravaged our coast.

"And even this is not the worst. In the blood of this woman runs the blood of the foreigners of the eastern isles, and their marriage having been consum-

mated in secret for more than a year, the two have already a child—a son—whom the Prince has named Dulo, after thy father, King. And the wife of the Prince is beautiful, and he loves her greatly, and hath sworn to make their child our future king, and the priests predict that his wish shall be fulfilled. And more than this I know not."

A murmur of consternation, of surprise, of perplexity, went round the vaulted chamber, and in the midst of it the slave stood trembling, fearful lest the weight of the Royal anger should fall upon him, the bringer of the evil news. As the murmur died away, Acron, the Secretary, picked up the crown and placed it once more on the King's head, and, with the gleam of a set resolve flushing his features, Vendis rose.

"'Tis well thou knowest no more, slave," he said, his voice ringing hard and stern, "for what thou dost know is enough to turn my greying hairs to white and plunge a nation into sorrow. But stand thou there, at my side, and fear not; I may want thee again.

"And to you, my people and ministers, what can I say? How can I look up again to the Spirits who have guarded Atlantis from her birth when I know that my son hath desecrated our line by wedlock with a woman of foreign blood, and would place her child upon the sacred throne? To you, my people, I can say little, save that my heart is grieved beyond the power of words to tell, and that rather than this, I would know that my son—who shall no longer be a son of mine—was lying dead, a hundred fathoms deep below the waves of the sea.

"But this I can say to the Eternal Spirits, this I can vow to them, by all that a man and a king may hold most dear; that neither Sanim, who was my son, nor his wife, nor their son, nor any children they may have, shall ever sit upon the Golden Throne of Atlantis. By the Three Spirits I make this vow. By all that is on earth, and in the sea, and in the Land of Shadows beyond the grave, I make it. By all I love and cherish, by my title and my dignity, and in the name of our loved Atlantis, I swear it. By Amarunth, the God of Death, I swear this vow: Sanim, who was my son, shall never come to the Golden Throne on which Queen Unnalala sat, nor shall his wife nor any of his children. I have spoken words beyond recall."

And raising his sword high above his head, King Vendis once more repeated the awful vow to the Eternal Three; the vow that might never be broken. And the people answered with a murmur of approval, though some, friends of the Prince, were silent, and turned sorrowfully away. Then Vendis spoke to the slave again:

"Go straightway to Miropis," said he, "and give Sanim word of what I have sworn this day, and add, that even though he come to me, and weep tears of blood at my knees, that which is done cannot be undone. And tell him, moreover, that it were better he never saw my face again; that it were better he shook the dust of his native land from off his feet, and sought a home amongst the people of the eastern isles whom he has run after to make his kith and kin. And say also, to those meddling priests of the Sanctuary of the Sleeper, that I hold their prophecies of small account, and that it is in my mind to raise one of our brave generals to the throne when the mists of death begin to dim my eyes. Tell them this, and may all the land know it also .... And you, my ministers, leave me, for the blow is a sore one, and I would fain be alone awhile.'

The slave, swift of foot, departed on his errand, the Royal Guard cleared the Audience Chamber of the crowd, and King Vendis passed beneath the purple curtain to his own room. And for forty days, as at the death of his wife, Viola, the Royal household went into mourning.

Bactri the slave was a trusty messenger, and in due time came to the palace at Miropis and told the Prince what the King had said.

Sanim heard him to the end with unmoved face, though there was a terrible fire in his eyes, and when he had heard all, he bent his head, as though in submission. Then he dismissed the Nubian with a handsome present, and went into the inner hall and told Isida, his wife. It was then the morning, and before noon the whole city was agog with the news, and many of the more reckless spirits of the place were for acclaiming Sanim as their King and setting up in open revolt.

But Sanim would have none of it, and bade them get ready his favourite pleasure barque, and just as the even shades began to fall, went down to the harbour with his wife and child and got aboard. A mournful crowd of the people went to the water's edge to bid him good speed in parting token of their esteem, and as the graceful vessel gathered way under the impulse of her hundred oars and swept swiftly down the narrow channel to the bosom of the sea, Prince Sanim felt a choking in his throat and a strange dimness before his eyes.

The ship held on, the cheering of the people grew fainter and more faint until it ceased, the lights came together in a cluster of brilliant points that faded to a haze on the horizon, and the outcast turned his gaze away, and seized Isida in his arms and kissed her fiercely and then the babe that nestled at her breast, and then strode to the bow, muttering angrily to himself. And how the gay ship fared thereafter was never known, for no native of Atlantis ever saw its lines of symmetry again.

Now King Vendis grew old and weary of his life, and repented him of the rashness of the vow he had made but could not undo. The fawning flatteries of the Court grew less pleasant to his ears, the pomp and panoply of martial ceremonial less pleasing to his eyes, the droning of the priestly services distasteful to his soul, and more and more he passed his time upon the sea, aboard his favourite warship, chasing the pirates, and learning, in his latter years, the arts of naval war.

Four years after the banishment of Sanim, being then in his sixty-first year, King Vendis put off in the bright glow of a summer noon from the harbour of Kronos, with a squadron of ships, headed by his vessel, the *Monarch of Storms*. The captains put their prows to the east, for the ships were well filled with men, and they had certain news of the whereabouts of a pirate flotilla that had long been a terror to the coast. And chief of that pirate fleet—seen now and then, and never at one place twice or for long—was a rakish, low-built craft, with queer rigging, and monstrous lion-head upon her upcurved prow. This ship was a scourge to the merchant vessels that poured the luxuries of the far-off East into the ports of Atlantis, and it was whispered by some who had seen it that it was commanded by a reckless Atlantian and his lovely wife, and that he was none other than Sanim the Prince. But there were others who denied this.

So King Vendis paced the deck of his great ship in sullen mood as the leagues of glittering amethyst were overpassed on the way to the isles set in the sunny eastern sea, and not until the squadron came in sight of

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a dozen pirate vessels making northward, did his interest awaken. Then he ordered all speed to be put on, and after the now flying vessels the seven royal ships foamed on through the tumbling waves, in the teeth of a rising gale.

The chase was a long and stern one, but the warships slowly gained, and by nightfall of that day the *Monarch of Storms* was within a cable's length of the rearmost foe, and her six consorts were far behind, visible only as black specks in the wild waste of waters. The pirate strove to tack and so escape, but the great ship was too near, and drove on resistless through the seething spray, and her sharp-cutting prow, catching the doomed craft on the port-bow, shore her in twain and passed on. The severed fragments of the wreck, with the shrieking robbers aboard, floated a moment on the angry sea, then were swallowed up in the fury of the storm and the blackness of the night. The *Monarch of Storms* held on with scarcely a shiver of her staunch timbers, and the face of the King wore a grim smile of joy.

But the gale was now a tempest. The wind howled wildly through the rigging, and tore the lashing waves in giant furrows; the rain came down in a deluge that drenched the crew to the very skin. Out of the thick darkness of the cloud-banked sky came the flashes of the lightning and the rolling roar of the thunder-wheels of the gods, and when Vendis and his sailors looked around they saw only through the driving murk the fleet of pirate vessels speeding on in front. Behind was now no speck to break the wild greyness of the billowy expanse.

Through the stormy night the stern pursuit went on, and when the sun arose upon the waters, Vendis saw that nine ships only of the foe remained. But these now lay to and waited his coming, and as the *Monarch of Storms* forged up to them, closed round, and beset her on all sides. In his old age the King had grown reckless, and so refused to escape, bidding his men, with set, flushed face, be ready for the fray. One more ship they rammed ere they were boarded on bow and stern and quarters, and one they disabled beyond repair, but the other seven hung round the great ship as dogs round the hart driven to bay at last, and those tough pirates fought desperately when roused.

Yet the crew of the *Monarch of Storms* was an old and well tried one, and equal in number to three of the others, and they fought hard, and died well, standing there amidships round their King, and the robbers began to fear lest the combat should be prolonged till some of the other royal craft came on the scene.

Now Vendis had noted with wonder that the famous ship with the lion-headed prow was not amongst the hostile fleet, and was in secret glad, because of the rumour, but in the midst of the struggle, just as his keen blade struck one of the robber captains to the wet and slippery deck, he beheld the very vessel of his thought approaching on the leeward bow, riding the calming sea as lightly as a bird. And two figures there were upon her deck that made Vendis sick at heart—for one was Sanim his son, and the other a woman of surpassing loveliness. The King dashed the salt glaze from his face and plunged into the fight anew at that sight, and of the fifty sailors who now remained, none fought so desperately as he.

Now the lion-headed ship joined the rest, and her crew mingled with the others, and one by one the sailors were cut down, till presently Vendis alone was left, facing a ring of pitiless foes—wounded, weary, and forlorn. His grey and white hair and his evil plight might have moved some men to mercy, but the pirates were made of stern stuff, and closed round him with cries of revenge; and one giant of a fellow, Lycian by name, a grim and grizzled veteran of the deep, smote the King's sword out of the weakening fingers, and upraised his own broad gleaming blade to strike the fatal blow. A strange numbness seized King Vendis, a singing came in his ears, and he put his hand to his eyes as he leant against the mast, waiting for the moment of death.

But it came not. A man broke through the jeering ring with a woman at his side, and whilst his sword flew up and dashed away the falling blade, the woman threw herself between the victors and the vanquished, shielding the old man with her graceful form, as he sank to the deck in weakness. Sanim's act came just in time, yet so strong and forceful was big Lycian's stroke that his sword point swept down within an inch of Isida's heaving breast, even cutting a little gash in the linen of her tunic.

"Back, you! Murderers all!" cried the Prince. "Have I not cautioned you against this deed? Would you have me the slayer of my father, or the captain of his slayers? Back, all of you, and leave us!"

The men, obedient, and amazed at Isida's daring for the sake of her husband's father, shrank back to the decks of the nearer ships, leaving the three alone. Then Sanim raised the King, his father, from the deck, and Isida staunched his wounds and cleansed his face and spoke to him words of loving care. For awhile Vendis answered not, though tears stood in his eyes and his hands trembled in her grasp. Then he said, slowly:

"The Spirits be thanked for this day! Now I know that my son is no rebel but a son indeed, and fit to be a King, and that his wife is lovely indeed, and worthy to be his Queen. The gods be praised for this day of ill-fortune!"

"But the vow—the vow that cannot be recalled?" said Sanim. "What of that? Thou canst not make me King now, howsoever thou mayst wish. Thou canst not undo the evil that thou didst in thy passion, and which has embittered me against thee ever since until this day."

"Be not too sure, my son," said Vendis, recovering a little, a queer smile growing on his face. "I may yet set thee upon the throne of Atlantis, though I may not break my word. Wilt thou be my son again, and forget and forgive; and wilt thou, lovely one, be as a daughter to me, and pardon the past, if I can do this?"

"Right wil ingly!" they cried together, and while the puckers of perplexity gathered deeper on the brow of the Prince, Isida bent down and kissed the old man on the lips.

"It is well," he said, with a sigh of satisfaction. "Now do as I command, Sanim, remembering that I am King Vendis and thou art the Prince, my son. First call me thy most trusted men hither, so that I may speak with them, and then—if things fall out as I expect—thou wilt come back to Kronos with me and live in my palace till that end comes, which I feel is not far off."

Sanim summoned the men as he was bid, and the scarred and sour-faced pirates stood round, a strangely silent line. The King was now so far recovered that he was able to support himself against the mast.

"My stalwart men," he said, and there was a royal ring in his tone, "I have but little to say to you, in whose power I am, but that little will be no supplication

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for mercy. "I am still your King, and I ask you to leave your reckless and uncertain life and take service with me. If you will bring your arms and your ships, your tough sinews and stern wills, into my fleet, you shall have riches and honours galore and no past faults shall be remembered against you. It is your King who asks and offers this."

A moment there was silence and suspense among those rough-and-ready robbers of the sea, then Lycian threw down his sword at the King's feet and knelt upon it, and swore by Amarunth that henceforward the King would have no trustier servant than he. And with that the others joined him in a shout of boisterous acclamation that startled the flying gulls, and raised their weapons to the sky in token of the self-same will. The last shadow of sorrow left the King's face.

"Well said, my worthy sailors," he answered. "I have fought many fights upon the sea, and won many victories, but to-day's defeat hath pleased more than any of them. I am but an old man on the shore of the Shadows, and I feel that Atlantis will not know me long, so now I would return and see my son enthroned before fate intervenes. You will man this noble ship at once, and set your prows for Atlantis and for home."

The sailors, with veterans' eyes, conned the powerful build and matchless lines of the great battleship with exultant joy, and as the seven pirate ships turned their bows to the westward, the *Monarch of Storms* swept grandly to the front and led the way to the harbour of Kronos, her new crew chanting the rollicking refrain of the "*Ina-Ana*," the war-song of the seas.

A fleet came out to meet them as they neared the bar on which the white surf rose, a fleet of many ships, for the people thought it was a pirate raid, but King Vendis stood high on the deck of his ship, with Sanim and Isida at his side, and when the captains saw that they turned about with joy, and a swift barque bore the news to the city, and all became excitement and pleasure and boundless amaze.

That very day the King gave secret orders to sundry of his artificers, and sent out word by his heralds that rejoicing must be made at the coming home of his son the Prince, and Isida the future Queen, and their little one, Dulo, for he was reconciled to them again and before many days Sanim would be made King.

On the eve of the eventful day the Stately City held high carnival, and in the bright, propitious morning, as the hour drew near, a crowd congregated in the pillared palace courts, and the grey-clad soldiers had much ado to keep the thronging thousands within the limits set for them. But their task was not a hard one, for the eager citizens were full of good nature and high spirits, and passed the time of waiting with jest and song.

A great roar of acclaim went up as the prancing steeds and the golden-filigreed car drew up at the marble steps, and Vendis and his grandson stepped out and bowed together to the people, and Sanim and Isida followed, and all went into the palace and stood in the open place before the throne. The priests and nobles went in after them, and then all the populace who could find standing room, and as every man went in a look of surprise grew on his face, and over the whole assembly a spell of silence fell.

For at the foot of the throne steps, where the royal party stood, lay a massive ingot of solid gold, gleaming dully yellow in the softened light, and over the throne itself was thrown a covering of purple cloth. And behind the seat stood Bactri the slave—high now in the King's favour—and behind him the repentant pirates, a grim-visaged group.

"What meaneth this?" cried a voice from the crowd.

In answer, Acron the secretary stood forth, and bowing low to Prince Sanim, said:

"King, I salute thee! This day, as he hath declared in the temple, Vendis, our former King, giveth his crown and his sword, and his dignity, and the throne of Atlantis, into thy keeping whilst thou livest."

"But the vow!" cried Namen, the priest of Truth. "The vow! By all the laws and customs of Atlantis, the King cannot do this thing. He hath given his word, sworn to the gods an oath that may never be broken."

A murmur of disappointment, mingled with anger, rose from the mighty throng, but Vendis smiled quietly as he said:

"Nor shall I break my vow. What said I, Bactri, when I swore it?"

"These were thy words, King," said the Nubian slave with a glitter of mirth in his coal-black eyes. "That by the Eternal Spirits and all that a man and a king may hold dear, neither Sanim, who was thy son, nor his wife, nor their son, nor any children of theirs, should ever sit upon the Golden Throne of Atlantis. By all the gods, by all things, thou madest this vow: *That Sanim, who was thy son, should never come to the Golden Throne, nor should his wife, nor any of his children.* That was thy vow, King."

The face of Sanim darkened as he heard the words, and Isida's clouded with sorrow, and perplexity came to many, but Vendis remained calm.

"And that vow I shall preserve," he said. "Sanim, my son shall never sit upon the Golden Throne, nor shall any King of Atlantis ever sit upon it again. But upon the throne of Atlantis shall Sanim, my son, be crowned this day. It is time, slave!"

All eyes were strained upon Bactri as he gathered a corner of the cloth that covered the throne, in his hand, and a cry of astonishment went up as he drew it aside with a sudden movement, revealing a regal chair of pure and polished silver, inlaid with rose-coloured granite and ivory stars.

"Go forward, Sanim," cried his father, in the silence, "and Namen shall place the crown upon thy head; and thou, Isida, shall sit beside him and be his Queen. As for little Dulo, he shall stay here with me."

Acting as one in a dream, Sanim obeyed, and was made King; the first King of Atlantis who was crowned on the Silver Throne. And upon that self-same silver seat was Arnon, its last King, crowned, in the days of the end.

"And where is the Golden Throne that has so long been used?" asked one.

"It is here," said Vendis, placing his foot on the ingot of gold. "And half of it shall be given in equal parts to the stalwart pirates who rallied to my flag in the hour of their success, and the other half shall be given amongst all those in Kronos who are poor and in need. And now come with me, little Dulo, for I am weary already and would fain rest."

A thunderous roar of appraise rose from a thousand throats as the ex-King and his little grandson the Prince went out and stepped into their car to be whirled off to the palace in the suburbs. And as the rattle of the chariot wheels died away and King Sanim turned to Queen Isida his wife with words of love upon his lips, the trained priests led the people in the joyful chorus of a festive song.

Geo. C. Wallis

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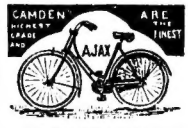

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Answers to Correspondents.

Half-a-Dozen volumes of Mr. Louis Tracy's book, "The Final War," will be given to the first six readers who correctly place the sketches on pages 502-5 in their proper order with the corresponding reading matter underneath. Simply write on a sheet of paper the numbers of the sketches in the order you believe correct, and alongside each figure place the text. Envelopes to be marked "Reading," and to reach this office by Tuesday, April 20th.

T. H. asks: "What is the cause of cold perspiration?" ——— There are several ways of finding out this by personal experience. Try stepping upon a dog in the dark.

J. F. B. wants to know if there is such a thing as a women's boating club. Yes, at a women's college at Boston, in America, there is a boating "eight" composed entirely of girl students.

D. H. — Alas, there are too many methods of torture employed in Siberia to mention in these columns. One of the most fearful ways in which information is extracted from prisoners is by means of thirst. The victim is fed entirely upon salt herrings, and allowed nothing whatever to drink. This treatment promotes such inconceivable agony that, after a time, he is almost invariably willing to impart whatever is required of him.

G. D.—Do not be disheartened because the parents of the girl you love do not look upon your suit with favour. If she is anything like the rest of her sex, it will only make her all the more determined to marry you.

J. J.—We are very much obliged to you for the trouble you have taken to make *Short Stories* known amongst your friends. It is indeed the most practical way in which you can show your appreciation of the paper.

The result of the first series of *Pearson's* Picture Puzzles appears in *P. W.* dated April 17th.

R. B.—Geraniums are considered an excellent balm for cuts and wounds where the skin is rubbed off. Bruise a few leaves and apply them to the part, and you will find the wound will be cicatrised in a very short time.

R. D. writes to ask me if I can tell him who was the inventor of the "penny-in-the-slot" machines. ——— An American named Everitt was the inventor of the present-day machines. The same principle, however, was used by the Egyptians two hundred years before the Christian era.

Particulars will be found on page 506 regarding *Pearson's Athletic Record*, one of the new papers issued from this office. Its chief object will be to give full and graphic details of all Saturday's sports, and to publish reports on the subject of cricket, cycling, and swimming, as well as golf, hockey, and lacrosse; and votaries of any one of these sports will find all they wish to know in the *Athletic Record*. The paper is published every Monday morning, and may be obtained from newsagents and booksellers for a penny.

P. K.—The habit of opium eating kills about 160,000 people in China every year.

D. B. wishes to know if it is possible to obtain a blue rose. ——— No. The law which governs the colouring of flowers makes a blue rose an impossibility.

W. H.—The works of Charles Dickens are more widely read on the Continent than those of any other English novelist. Thackeray and George Eliot are also great favourites abroad.

J. W. A.—Many thanks for the suggestion, but it is impracticable. A single odd sheet cannot be inserted in either *Pearson's Weekly* or *Short Stories* unless it is pasted, and the cost of doing this would be prohibitive.

A. Beginner.—If you find that you lose your breath as a result of continuous running, the best thing you can do is to stop it altogether—the running.

A. B.—No; the Arabs eat very little animal food. They live almost entirely on dates and a coarse kind of bread, and seldom drink anything but water.

Engrosser.—If you are troubled with cramp do not write too long at a time, and use a thick-handled pen.

J. Y.—Certainly you can sign your insurance coupon with a copying pencil, provided it is treated in the way you mention.

H. J. Chapman.—Hyde Park would hold 8,712,960 people. This is assuming that all the timber was removed and that the people were allowed to stand on the flower-beds.

H. H. has very sensitive nerves, and is very much annoyed when at a theatre or opera for an evening's enjoyment by the amount of time devoted by the orchestra to the tuning of their instruments. "Why in the world don't they tune up before coming into the orchestra?" he growls. ——— So they do, my dear H. H., but if you knew anything about stringed instruments, you would understand the reason. The slightest change of temperature influences the catgut of the strings—even the performer's own breath affects it. The loosening of a peg or the slightest alteration in the tension of the strings all tend to necessitate a second tuning.

J. M. F.—Subject to certain exemptions, it is still lawful in case of emergency to impress men for service in Her Majesty's service.

E. C. B. is insured with an American life assurance society, and wishes to know if in the event of war occurring between this country and the United States, the company would cease paying the annuity. ——— I should think that the payment would be stopped unless the company had in this country sufficient funds to meet all demands.

A. G. wishes to know if any members of our Royal Family have ever been tattooed. ——— Yes. Both the sons of the Prince of Wales, the late Duke of Clarence and the present Duke of York, were tattooed on the arms while on a visit in Japan. The Duke of Edinburgh was also tattooed by the Japanese.

B. B.—Ships can travel at a greater speed in deep than in shallow water.

L. C. M. (Glasgow).—No glasses are made which fit under the eyelids, unless they have been constructed by a private person for his own use. Even then, I don't see the use of them.

J. H. H.—Such a series of articles as you suggest appeared in *Pearson's Weekly* some time ago. It was entitled: "How to Succeed," and dealt with all the chief trades.

J. B. C. and Allison.—I dare say you would be able to obtain a bottle of the water from the priest in charge of the Shrine at Lourdes.

In a Fix.—If there is any substance lighter than cork that can be cut into perfectly round balls about the size of a pea with a very smooth surface, I have never heard of it.

May.—No, there is no such thing as a sea serpent. The belief in these creatures dates from very early times. Some wonderful stories have been told of these so-called sea serpents, but nothing authentic has ever been proved. A large mass of seaweed has on more than one occasion been cautiously approached, and even harpooned, under the impression that it was one of these monsters of the deep.

Notice to Competitors.

In all Prize Competitions the Editor's decision is final. No correspondence will be entertained when once a competition is finished and the result published.

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Sir William Onslow, Bart., writes: "I was much pleased with the 'Queen's Royal' Carpet and Rugs which I had from you a short time ago. Please send me another, 12ft. by 18ft., £2 2s., with three Hearthrugs to match. Cheque inclosed."

Castle Hill, Ealing, London, June 4th.

"Lady Madeline Erskine received the 'Queen's Royal' Reversible Carpet from Mr. F. Hodgson, the dark terra-cotta colour which she likes very much. Please send another at earliest, same size, dark art shades. Cheque inclosed."

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9ft. by 9ft.	7/6		12ft. by 13½ft.	14/6
9ft. by 10½ft.	8/6		12ft. by 15ft.	15/9
9ft. by 12ft.	9/6		12ft. by 18ft.	19/6
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